

Quest of Reality

D. R. Khashaba

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PREFACE

This book offers a philosophy. Yes, a philosophy. For that is all any philosopher has ever given or can ever give: a personal, private vision of life, of the world, of Reality. Embedded in the vision here presented is the view of the nature of philosophical thinking implicit in these preceding words. We can say, then, that this book has a dual theme: a special view of the nature of philosophical thinking and, conformably with that view, a special vision of Reality.

This, like all of my books and other writings, is a personal statement. I make no pretence of learning. My sources are a limited selection, largely dictated by chance, of such classics as are accessible to all. I do not count this among my misfortunes. Every single truly good book raises all the fundamental questions that face humanity, and the true value of such a book does not reside in any conclusions it reaches, but in the challenge it offers the reader to wrestle with those fundamental questions herself or himself and articulate her or his own position. I have often found more enlightenment and inspiration in re-reading a book I had read before – perhaps more than once before – than in ten new books. So in this book I give my personal account of my wrestling with the questions that have puzzled all thinking humans from the beginning and this personal account is not offered for acceptance, but as an incitement and a challenge to help the reader puzzle on, for it is in this ferment of puzzling that we live as thinking human beings.

There is nothing in this book that I have not already said before in essence. My main purpose here has been to highlight the two features of my philosophy that, being opposed to common acceptations, readers find difficult to absorb despite all my insistence and reiteration: (1) the oracular nature of

philosophy and, in consequence, the essentially mythical character of philosophical expression; (2) the principle of creativity as an original dimension of reality which alone renders free will possible and renders becoming intelligible.

The book traces the human quest for Reality from the first gropings of primitive humans through the speculations of modern philosophers to my own confessedly personal vision. Chapter one, “In the Beginning”, gives a sketchy outline of the human quest of Reality in the earliest times. No erudition or originality is claimed. This is a simple outline drawn from commonly available sources. Chapter two, “The Ionian Venture”, a brief survey of the earliest Greek philosophers. Again, no pretence of scholarship or originality, though the interpretation may be ‘personal’. Chapter three, “Socrates” and chapter four, “Plato”: In these two chapters I claim to offer an original interpretation, opposed to the mainstream academic reading, laying the foundation for my original version of Platonism. Chapters five to eight on Aristotle, Spinoza, Kant, and Whitehead respectively: I show my agreements and disagreements with these four great thinkers to develop my own vision. My intention is neither expository nor critical; my approach is not scholarly and I have no use for ‘secondary literature’. Chapter nine, “Reality”, mainly explaining my special terminology where I distinguish between and oppose ‘reality’ and ‘existence’, a distinction which I think is needed to clear much confusion in philosophical thinking. Chapter ten, “Philosophical Thinking”, expounding one of two radically original features in my philosophy, namely, the oracular nature of philosophy. The other feature is what I call the Principle of Creativity. Chapters eleven and twelve are critical of Analytical and Empirical approaches in philosophy. Chapters thirteen to eighteen, “The Soul”, “God”, “Time, Duration, and Eternity”, “Three Metaphysical Principles”, “Creative Eternity”,

“Humanity”, these six chapters give the substance of my special philosophy. The two annexes are self-explanatory.

The method I followed in composing this book gives parts of it a chaotic shape. It consists mostly of distinct passages or reflections arranged under various headings. All the passages taken together form a consistent and integrated whole but successive passages are not always linked consequentially. To have tried to streamline the whole would have required more effort and time than one past his mid-eighties could reasonably expect to have at his disposal. Nevertheless I proudly, one might say arrogantly, aver that the book presents a system of philosophy in the grand manner that has been out of fashion for nearly a century but that I believe is the only genuine form of philosophy worth the name.

D. R. Khashaba

Sixth-October City, Egypt, 6 March 2013

CHAPTER ONE

IN THE BEGINNING

I. RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND PHILOSOPHY

We cannot know what the earliest members of the human species thought or what they experienced. Moreover, as it is not really possible to draw a sharp line to mark the emergence of the human species, it is futile to speculate – and utterly idiotic to dogmatize – on the subjective condition of our animal kin. But we may perhaps safely say that religion accompanied the emergence of humans from the very start. For we can imagine that when humans found themselves encompassed by a world harsh, bountiful, hostile, friendly, mysterious, all at once, they must have been awed and puzzled. The roaring thunder was a more frightful animal than the roaring lion and the raging storm was as fierce an enemy as the deadly tiger. The sun that brought warmth and light was as gracious as the cooling and refreshing stream, as the tree that freely gave its fruit. More close at home, woman for

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man and man for woman were no less puzzling, no less propitious, at times no less menacing.

We can understand how humans worked out myths to explain the puzzle of the sun waning, dying, and being swallowed up on one side and then coming up again on the other side; the puzzle of water falling from the sky above; and the ultimate puzzle of death. We can understand how humans sought, by gifts and supplications, to appease the angry god in the dark cloud that thundered and hurled bolts of fire from on high; to propitiate the willful sky-water; to ensure the goodwill of the sun-god. From the start these two parallel strains stood side by side in all religion: the attempt to explain, to understand, how things came about and the attempt to conciliate the powers behind the things. The explanatory myth-making produced dogmatic beliefs and the attempt to influence and win over the forces and powers controlling the natural processes produced the rites, rituals, and forms of worship in the various religions. In time the urge to find explanations and to understand broke loose from the confines of religion and developed into science and philosophy: again twins that issued from the same womb but each having a distinct character and destined to have a distinct life history.

Primitive peoples did not have to infer or to hypostatize the existence of gods. They were all the time confronting the gods, coming in contact with them. The gods are the forces beyond our control. There are benevolent gods and there are malevolent gods. When the gods were personalized and gathered in a pantheon, it was natural that there should be chief gods and a first-ranking god. At first there were several different ways in which the world was thought to have come about. Some time, in certain cultures, the chief god had a hand in shaping the world. It seems that only the Hebrews had the preposterous idea that their favorite god (or the god who favored them) made the world out of nothing — an idea absurd in itself and which leaves the

problem of the origin of things exactly where it was in the beginning. To go back to the gods that primitive peoples knew — when modern science advanced considerably in the art of manipulating and directing those ‘gods’ — a process which had begun very early in the human venture — scientists foolishly thought that they had emptied those gods of life: they created the myth of matter and the useful fiction of mechanical forces was believed to be the whole truth; what is more, those forces were believed to be completely subject to the ‘laws’ the scientists formulated for them. Kant’s insightful but half-hearted ‘Copernican revolution’ did not open the eyes of the Empiricists drunk with the strong wine of their practical successes. When Wittgenstein wrote, “The whole modern conception of the world is founded on the illusion that the so-called laws of nature are the explanations of natural phenomena” (*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.371), his heresy was indulgently overlooked because of his earlier fervent declaration of faith — though it is hard to say faith in what.

Incidentally, we may note that morality is not connected with either of these two strains. Morality has a distinct genealogy. If anyone should cite Moses’ ‘ten commandments’ at this point I would point out that the first four commandments (Exodus, 20:2-11) are religious, they regulate the relations of the worshippers with their god, and the remaining commandments (20:12-17) are socio-political, giving the basic regulations necessary for the existence of any society.

Of all the ancient creation myths, the monotheistic myth of an all-powerful god outside the world, creating the world out of nothing, is the most inane. It is a curiosity of human history, which we should have found very puzzling if familiarity had not blunted our sense of wonder, that it has had such a hold and continues to have such a hold on the minds of millions upon millions of persons who otherwise show themselves to be

sensible and reasonable, while tens and scores of comparable myths are now found simply amusing. To the simplest mind it raises more questions than it answers, as we can all easily ascertain. Any normal child when told that the world was made by God, immediately asks: And who made God? But it may be that the myth in the form consolidated by Christianity and Islam was not the original Hebrew version. Although the first sentence in the Book of Genesis says, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth", the following verses may suggest that God had some material to work with. But although this may remove the absurdity of creation out of nothing, it does not evade the problem of God himself remaining without an explanation. Admittedly, ultimate reality must remain an ultimate mystery, so why not God? The point is that creationists start by demanding a cause for existence and then exempt the existence of God from the demand without justification. Since we have to acquiesce in an ultimate mystery, what is the use of pushing the mysterious body a few paces away from our front door?

On the moral front, I confess that I have never been convinced by what thinkers in the Christian world claim to be the special worth of the Hebrew tradition. There are of course bits of moral substance scattered in the Prophets, and there are a couple of literary gems in the Hebrew Bible, but both this and that are more than matched in the Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Persian, and Indian traditions. And what is utterly pernicious in the Hebrew tradition outweighs, in my opinion, what is of merit. The gods on Mount Olympus, with all of what Hesiod and Homer relate about them, were innocent babes relatively to what Jehovah was capable of perpetrating. I think two extraneous factors help the Hebrew claim: (1) that their scripts have been better kept; (2) that the Church has embraced the Hebrew tradition as an integral part of Christianity.

II: MORAL INSIGHTS

I

Just as the roots of all modes of human thinking strike deep, very deep, into the soil of our pre-human origins, so I am convinced the origins of moral sentiment go far back beyond the emergence of the human species. The tender care of a mother for her newborn is the same in a lioness as in a woman, and that, I believe, is the first germ of all morality.

In all human groups, from primitive tribes to highly civilized societies, we find natural, spontaneous fellow-feeling, goodwill, and empathy, over and above all duties and obligations imposed by law or convention. The shared concern that binds the members of a normal human family is nothing exceptional or unnatural; indeed, in primitive peoples it commonly extends to a whole tribe. What calls for explanation is the breakdown of these sentiments when we extend the area of human inter-action.

Krishna Chaitanya points out the parallelism between words of the Egyptian Neferrohu's and words of the Rig Veda. Neferrohu says: "One is wealthy, another is in want. He that last year was rich is now a groom ... Eat no bread when another is in want without stretching out thy hand to him with bread." The Rig Veda says: "Fortune, like two chariot wheels revolving, now to one man comes nigh, now to another ... Who has the power should give unto the needy ... One who feeds all by himself sins all by himself." (*Ancient Mesopotamian & Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1964, Preface, pp.viii-ix.) In both the Egyptian and the Indian texts we see the common observation of the fickleness of fortune leading not to a paltry egotistic concern for one's own security, as might be expected, but to a humane solicitude for the needy. This is not

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unrelated to what we find in more than one place in Plato's dialogues where power is seen as entailing responsibility. This is the gist of Socrates' argument with Thrasymachus in Book One of the *Republic*. At 342c-d Socrates says: "No science studies or demands the advantage of the more powerful, but that of the weaker which is ruled by it." (See my *Plato: An Interpretation*, p.166.)

The Babylonian prayer finds gladness not in any crude pleasure or selfish gain or possession but in the life-giving care of a parent:

"May thy heart, as the heart of a mother who hath borne children, be glad;
As a mother who hath borne children, as a father who hath begotten, may it be glad!"

(Krishna Chaitanya, *Ancient Mesopotamian & Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1964, p.16.)

And this is not an exceptional sentiment or attitude but is genuinely representative.

The simple joys of life are acknowledged everywhere from the earliest times. When Gilgamesh seeks to cross the ocean in search of everlasting life, Sabitu, the virgin-goddess of the sea admonishes him:

O Gilgamesh, why dost thou run in all directions?
The life that thou seekest, thou will not find.
When the gods created mankind,
They determined death for mankind,
Life they kept in their own hands.
Thou, O Gilgamesh, fill thy belly,
Day and night dance and make music.
Let thy garments be made clean.

Let thy head be washed and be thou bathed in water.
Give heed to the little one who takes hold of thy hand.
Let a wife rejoice in thy bosom,
For this is the mission of man.

(Krishna Chaitanya, *Ancient Mesopotamian & Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 1964, pp.32-33.)

Krishna Chaitanya quotes the following words from a rich Babylonian state-owner's letter: "Our estate seems to me the finest in the world, for it is so near to Babylon that we enjoy all the advantages of a great city and yet we can come back home and be rid of all its rush and worry." A New Yorker, a Londoner, a Cairene will readily empathize with that sensible Babylonian.

It is not religion that inculcates the higher virtues in a people: religion, in developing, absorbs and reflects the moral insights gained by a people in the process of living. "You can only speak of mercy", A. N. Whitehead says, "among a people who, in some respects, are already merciful" (*Religion in the Making*, p.34).

II

Zarathustra, like all reputed 'founders' of religions, was a reformer who worked within an inherited tradition, a polytheism comprising good and bad spirits or gods. This represents the common outlook of primitive peoples reacting to the inescapable encounter with the apparently benign and hostile forces in the natural world. Zarathustra emphasized the struggle of good and evil and announced his devotion to Ahura Mazda, 'the Lord Wisdom'. While acknowledging, in agreement with his inherited tradition, the power of evil, he saw the good of a human being and the worth of a human being in corresponding "by a deliberate act of choice with the beneficent purpose of the good God, finding his happiness in dedicating all his faculties to his service." He had "a horror of any oppression of the poor." "There is no way of fellowship with God

... but ... the way of likeness to God.” I have been quoting from Charles Gore, *The Philosophy of the Good Life*, 1930, 1935. Gore’s interpretation at certain points may be influenced by Plato and Christianity but in the main it probably gives a true impression of the moral insight in Zarathustra’s outlook.

III

Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, was early impressed by the vanity and the misery of life and, true to his Brahmanic culture, saw the world, as presented in the common experience of humankind, as both unreal and evil.

Desire for the Buddha is the root of all evil — desire in the widest unqualified sense, the *élan vital*, the Will of Schopenhauer, in other words it is life as such that is evil. This is clearly in line with the Brahmanic view that existence as such is evil. Is the Buddha’s attitude not unduly pusillanimous? I prefer to say that all existence, and hence all life, is tragic, but from the very stuff of tragedy the human spirit creates beauty and value; perhaps there is some sense, fantastic or not, in which we can say the same of God — be that as it may, we can confidently say that we, human beings, can and do create beauty and value out of the stuff of tragedy, and that is the one possible justification of human life.

The Buddha’s theory about the dissolution of the individual in death and re-composition through desire, as a theory, may have been highly fantastic but the practical philosophy of life he based on it was commendable. In general it agrees with the outlook of Stoicism and of Christianity.

If it were not for the Buddha’s adherence to the Karma doctrine, he would have found that at death we all pass away entirely “with that utter passing away in which nothing whatever is left behind” (Rhys Davids’ *Buddhism*, p.48, quoted by Gore, p.67). Does that render the teaching of the Buddha futile? No more than the denial of heaven and hell in an afterlife renders the teaching of

Jesus futile. The value of all morality resides in the quality of life it opens for us in the here and now. Nirvana is not a reward we collect at death, but is an achievement we live through in life.

It seems that the attitude of the Buddha towards all knowledge was a radical pyrrhonism, but even if we relegate all views to the 'jungle of mere opinion', we cannot deny the mind's hunger for intelligibility, for an area of opinion, confessedly mere opinion, but nevertheless an expanse of opinion that is internally consistent and coherent. That is the great insight of Plato: all of our knowledge is mere opinion, the foundation of which can and must be demolished by dialectic, and in the act of demolishing the foundations of our opinion we live the reality of creative intelligence.

The Buddha's kindly and generous nature saved him from falling into the indifference to life and the apathy in the face of suffering commonly associated with the Brahmanic outlook. He preached love and "the love insisted upon is extended to animals as well as men, and consideration for them is to reach beyond the scrupulous refusal to take animal life. Thus the credit of having first founded hospitals – and even for animals – undoubtedly belongs to Buddhism" (Gore, p.72).

It seems that "Gautama accepted as a fact the existence of gods and spirits; but they all, like human 'selves', belonged to the world of the compounded and evanescent, and he was bound to regard speculation about them as a waste of time to be deprecated" (Gore, p.68). I think Socrates would have endorsed this full-heartedly.

IV

Next to nothing is known with certainty about the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. We can perhaps take it for certain that he was immersed in the Hebrew tradition but wanted to purify and reform the beliefs and practices of the Judaism of his day. The lapse of time between the events and the first records

was long enough to obliterate facts, generate myths, and mix up memories with fancies and make-believe. The Epistles, especially Paul's, are clearly a gross falsification. But we may assume that the Synoptic Gospels – leaving out the Fourth which is a metaphysical allegory – contain a factual core. And it is that core – which I find in the Sermon on the Mount and a couple of the parables – that is of lasting value.

Did Jesus believe he was the Messiah? Did his disciples and followers make him believe he was the Messiah? Even in that case, his conception of his Messianic mission, even if it diverged from the Hebraic conception, could hardly have been the one constructed by Paul's rich imagination.

It is not my intention to trace here the development of the daunting superstructure that soon swallowed up the original core and continued to grow mightier over the centuries. That is for history to follow, not for a work on philosophy. But it is relevant to state that Christianity did humanity a great service by absorbing, preserving, and disseminating much of what was best in Greek thought. That almost exonerates the Church for the evil it did over the centuries.

V

The expression 'absolute values' is incoherent. Nothing that is definite or particularized can be meaningfully absolute. The expression 'objective values' also is incoherent. In "Must Values be Objective?" (included in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009) I tried to deal with the ambiguity of the term and to show why I think it better to speak of the *reality* of values instead.

Rosalind Murray writes, "There is difference between love of God and human love, however divinized and transmuted. The cup of cold water given in our Lord's name is different fundamentally, and in essence, from the cup given in natural kindness only, and if we lose sight of this central truth the foundation of all our values is

undermined ...” (*The Forsaken Fountain*, 1948, p.136). This is an example of how we permit our superstitions to enslave our minds. The “cup given in natural kindness only” may be an instance of mere animal fellow-feeling though it may also be infused with principle. The cup “given in our Lord’s name” has a myth attached, which gives it a spiritual dimension, but the harm done by the lie in the myth can outweigh the gain. But how could losing sight of the difference undermine “the foundation of all our values”? I am afraid this betrays a heteronomous understanding of morality; it sees “all our values” as coming from an extraneous power. Everything depends on the answer we give to Socrates’ question in the *Euthyphro*: Is righteousness righteous because the gods approve of it or do the gods approve of it because it is righteous? If our values do not spring from our inner reality then we have no intrinsic value, no integrity, no dignity.

III: ONTOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

I

Just as we find common moral insights in all human societies, we also find common ontological insights. In the myths of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia, India, and elsewhere, we can observe a number of ontological insights: the inter-relatedness of all things; the life force pervading all things; the evanescence of things; the universality of death and of regeneration.

From one perspective, it is amazing how simple and how evident the basic ontological truths disclosed by the Brahmanic worldview are: the oneness of the All, the evanescence of all particular things, the unity of death and life. “Nothing is real but the one Self, unchangeable, inexpressible — the Self (Atman) which is identical with Being (Brahman).”

For Brahmins ‘I am’ is an illusion. It would be better to say that the ‘I am’ – the whole conception of the Self, the personality

of a human being – is a dream, and that the dream is the reality – all the reality – of the actual.

The Brahmanic “Atman is Brahman” I render as: Our inner reality is all the reality we know and is the only image of ultimate Reality that my mind finds intelligible and satisfactory; more than that I cannot affirm; I cannot say that that is true of the All.

The original sin is the sinfulness of existence. The tragic hero sins in thinking that, being good, she or he is entitled to being happy. This is *hubris*. The tragic hero forgets that, in existing, in being an existent, she or he cannot be good without qualification; no existent is free of imperfection, and the imperfection at the heart of every existent entails the necessity of its corruption and final extinction.

II

In *Hypatia's Lover* (2006) I gave an outline of a metaphysical interpretation of the Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris, an outline which at one time I had intended to work out in some detail. I reproduce here an excerpt from the third chapter:

After another pause Hypatia continued, “Let us as a first step distribute the roles of the major personalities of the myth. Ra, although a sun-god, is not confined to that ‘natural’ role but is clearly seen as the chief god and as supreme god. In our allegorization we do not go far wrong if we take Ra to stand for Reality.

“Let us next take Nut, Ra’s consort, to represent bare Existence, equivalent to Plato’s Receptacle which he also designates the Womb. It is from the womb of Nut that Osiris, Isis, Seth, and Nephthys come into being. Then I will take Osiris to stand for good and for creativity. Isis I will take initially to stand for wisdom, like the Greek Athena, the Roman Minerva, for we should never forget that these

elemental traits of reality are necessarily sensed by the human soul everywhere and are embodied in various forms.

“For Seth I reserve a most important metaphysical role, for I take Seth to represent the principle of Negation, which is the root and indispensable condition of all finite existence. Seth is not evil but is the negation inherent in all particularity and his destructiveness is the Transience which is the father of Becoming. Seth is Death which is only the other face of regeneration and the birth of life. That is why in the myth Seth cyclically destroys Osiris to let him come into life anew. Perhaps it is not irrelevant to allude here to the cyclical argument in Plato’s *Phaedo*.

“For Nephthys too I have a fundamental metaphysical role, but at this stage I will simply characterize her as Thought, the ingenious, crafty power opposed to the ingenuous wisdom of Isis. Let me quickly complete the role distribution before going on to develop certain lines of my allegorical interpretation of the myth. Horus, the child of the love-embrace, is Becoming. Hapi, the Nile-god, is the stream of Time. The clever Thoth stands for science and learning. You will recall that Plato in the *Phaedrus* credits him with the invention of writing, and it does not escape Plato there to take him to task for thus seducing us into neglecting living discourse.”

My excuse for reproducing this long excerpt here is that it illustrates what I mean when I say that the basic ontological insights are common to all human cultures. The reason for this, in my view, is that these insights, whether they are presented in the guise of inspiration or revelation from some high source or whether they are offered as poetical inventions or as the outcome of philosophical speculation, in truth stem from our own inner reality.

IV: MYSTICISM

Genuine mysticism is communion with the inner reality of the person. The mystic experience, which is communion with the inner reality, is strictly ineffable. The mystic feels the need to give expression to her or his experience, her or his mystic insight, and can only do that in symbols. To do that, the mystic necessarily resorts to the symbols of the cultural tradition in which she or he was reared. Thus a Christian mystic uses Christian images and symbols, a Muslim mystic uses Islamic symbols, a Hindu mystic uses Hindu symbols. Most fortunate are artists and poets. They have at their disposal symbols which are not easily open to misinterpretation. Philosophers – and all genuine philosophic insight is essentially of a mystical nature – are less fortunate: they have to give expression to their insight into their inner reality in the symbolism of concepts and conceptual images, and these are commonly liable to gross misinterpretation, except when the philosopher designedly gives, like Plato, her or his expression overtly in mythical form. In truth, all philosophical expression is essentially mythical and much injustice to philosophers and to philosophy is removed when this is recognized.

It is a gross error to think of mysticism as opposed to rationality. What is opposed to rationality can be nothing but a misinterpretation of the symbolism of mystic expression. The attempt of advocates of institutionalized religions to find support for their dogmatisms in the symbolic expression of mystics falsifies the reality of the mystic experience. The condemnation of a Giordano Bruno or the beatification of a St. Teresa stem from the same error. Institutionalized religions, while persecuting the wild mystic aflame with consuming fire, embrace the tame saintly type dazed by passive emotion, though both these types are equally alien to the canonical dogma.

Bergson showed in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (1932) that it is an error to connect morals with religion. It is equally an error to connect mysticism with religion. In fact, there has always been opposition and conflict between mystics and institutionalized religion. When institutionalized religion has paid homage to certain mystics, it was always to take advantage of the religious symbolism employed by the mystic, to support a dogmatism that is essentially inimical to the mystic spirit. It is also an error to tie mysticism to supernaturalism which is always bound up with dogmatism and which is essentially opposed to the immediacy of mystic experience.

The connection of the word 'mysticism' with the traditional connotations of 'mystery' and 'mystery religions' is unfortunate. Mysticism must not be confounded with esotericism or supernaturalism. Mystic experience is in essence a purely subjective experience that the mystic regards as an experience of communion with ultimate reality. The experiencing subject may, and usually does, interpret that as communion with God. As I see it, the subjective experience is real and is essential for a personality developed to the full potential of humanity. But the interpretation placed on it is contingent on the individual's cultural background. To deny the subjective experience and the reality it reveals is to leave us with a defective humanity. To accept the exteriorized interpretation as literal truth is to succumb to superstition. But much worse still is to use the experience to justify and buttress the wild claims of supernaturalism and spiritism and the like.

The terms 'mystery' and 'myth' also have widely differing usages; I use these words in special senses that I believe the context sufficiently clarifies because I cannot find satisfactory alternatives and hope that the reader will not confound them with connotations that may be quite opposed to what I intend.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IONIAN VENTURE

[All fragments of Pre-Socratic thinkers quoted below are in John Burnet's translation.]

THE THINKERS OF MILETUS

Early in the sixth century BC a new plane of human thought came into being. First in Miletus and then in various Ionian locations, Greek thinkers sought to give an account of the world, not couched in a mythical tale, but expressed in a reasoned, coherent statement, to which no sanctity attached and no authority was claimed but was to be accepted or rejected on its merits.

The fragments that have come down to us from the writings of the earliest Ionian thinkers do not enable us to speak with confidence of what they thought. They are necessarily open to

various interpretations. What I give below is confessedly my own personal interpretation.

Thales seems to have found the *archê*, the first principle, of all things, in water as a substance that could apparently change from one state to another and could assume all shapes. The original thought behind that is the idea of the unity of all things, not only the notion that ultimately all things are of one common nature, but, more important than that, the idea of the integration of all things in a whole, the concept of the All. To my mind, we owe our concept of ‘the World’ to Thales. Of course, Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, and other earlier thinkers had spoken of the world as a whole, but that simply meant vaguely all things that are there; but the idea that all of that was one united whole was an original creative idea first introduced by Thales and his successors. And water as the *archê* was not for Thales neutral matter, as modern thinkers think of matter, since, for Thales, “All things are full of gods”, that is to say, all things are infused with vitality and energy. When Plato later said (*Sophist*, 247e) that the distinctive mark of the real is *dunamis* (power, activity) he was confirming the insight of Thales.

Philosophers create ideas through which the given content of experience – our world – obtains meaning, meaningfulness, intelligibility. Thus Thales originated the idea of the World as a coherent whole and the idea of an original and lasting reality beyond the changeable show of things. The particular, determinate articulation of the idea is unavoidable and is contingent. Without it the idea cannot have expression. But the idea, to remain alive, must constantly shed its body and be incarnated in a new body. Thus Anaximander took over the basic idea of Thales and gave it a new articulation. The primal substance of the All should not be identified with any one of the elements we find within the All. It is best to call it the *apeiron*, the indefinite, the infinite, or the boundless. The particular things

arise out of the boundless and pass back into it, when the elements encroach on one another they must “make reparation and satisfaction to one another”.

Anaximenes reverted to the example of Thales in identifying the *archê* with a given element, air. Perhaps he felt air was sufficiently insubstantial to be free of the taint of particularity. Moreover, it was not unreasonable to think that air is what keeps us alive, that it is indeed the element or the principle of life in us. He could say, “Just as our soul, being air, holds us together, so do breath and air encompass the whole world.” This once more illustrates for us how the determinate formulation of a philosophical vision is and must always be ephemeral. Its true value is that it gives us an ideal pattern to fill in, a skeleton to flesh, for ourselves. In doing so we live our life as intelligent beings. This is a theme that will keep us company to the end of this book.

The Ionians decreed that the world must be an intelligible whole. It was they who had first brought about what Kant was to call his Copernican revolution: they demanded that the world conform to their thought.

Whitehead tells us that “there can be no living science unless there is a widespread instinctive conviction in the existence of an *Order of Things*, and, in particular, of an *Order of Nature*” (*Science and the Modern World*, p.14). This ‘instinctive conviction’ is just what the Ionians bequeathed to us in their daring imaginative speculations *peri phuseôs* which presupposed that there is – indeed decreed that there be – an Order of Nature. The epithet ‘instinctive’ in Whitehead’s phrase is apt. In our scientific investigations we proceed as if we knew there is an order of nature; we seek to ‘discover’ the patterns and laws of that ‘order’, and the ways of nature obligingly seem to vindicate our instinctive conviction, but we are also constantly reminded, and constantly have to admit to ourselves, that our patterns and

laws are only approximations and are fabrications of our own; they are not actually found by us in the world, but are foisted by us on the world. Thus for Plato things aspire (*bouletai*) to be like the Forms but always fail to be (*Phaedo*, 74d-e): we may say that things as we perceive them – our representations of things – aspire to be like the Forms but always fail to be. We never know the reality of the world: the world as it is given to us in our experience has no reality; what reality it has is the reality we lend to it. This is also the gist of Kant's transcendental system.

PYTHAGORAS

If our difficulty in understanding the thought of the Milesian philosophers stems from our having too little information about them, our difficulty in understanding what the thought of Pythagoras was stems, on the contrary, from our having much information, but much that is confused and contradictory.

In the obscurity of the confused and uncertain reports that have reached us, it is impossible to say whether this or that particular contribution should be credited to the founder of the school or to his followers. But we may perhaps safely conjecture that the influences that shaped the thought of Pythagoras came from two sources: (1) the Orphic teaching and mysticism, and (2) the study of mathematics, specifically geometry and the study of number. About the Orphic influence I have little to say. The significance of what Pythagoreans thought or practiced in this area is a closed book to us. Not so the significance of their work in mathematics. Pythagoras or his immediate followers had the insight that number was at the base of all things in the world. Pythagoras has every right to claim thanks for all the wizardry of the digital technology ruling our world today and which may lead all humanity to better conditions or may wipe out the human race. The blame for the latter alternative, which is a very likely one,

cannot be laid on Pythagoras; it is our own folly that would bring it about.

In geometry (literally, the science of measuring land), Pythagoras took the Egyptian discovery that a triangle constructed with side lengths of 3, 4, and 5 units will always be a right-angled triangle and extracted from it the universal rule that the sum of the squares on the two shorter sides of a right-angled triangle is equal to the square on the side facing the right angle. Plato was to see in such insights confirmation of his conviction that only knowledge engendered purely and solely by the mind is to be accounted *epistêmê*, all other so-called knowledge is mere *doxa* (opinion).

In addition to the inestimable value of the Pythagorean contribution to the advancement of mathematics, we may sum up the importance of Pythagoras for the history of philosophy by saying that he or his school seems to have influenced Plato greatly. It seems it was Pythagoras who made philosophy into a way of life and made philosophical thinking turn on the question about what life is best for a human being.

XENOPHANES

In Xenophanes we come to a thinker who, no less than Pythagoras, contributed to giving philosophy a new orientation. He directed the shafts of rational thinking to traditional religion and beliefs. The Greeks did not have a ‘revealed’ sacred book, but the poetical works of Hesiod and Homer were thought to speak with authority of things divine. Xenophanes lambasted the beliefs derived from these works. “Homer and Hesiod have attributed to the gods all sorts of things which are matters of reproach and censure among men: theft, adultery and mutual deceit” (frag. 11). He satirized the anthropomorphism of the common mythological representation of the gods. “But mortals deem that the gods are begotten as they are, and have clothes like

theirs, and voice and form” (frag. 14). Xenophanes decries the folly of this. “Yes, and if oxen and horses or lions had hands, and could paint with their hands, and produce works of art as men do, horses would paint the forms of the gods like horses, and oxen like oxen, and make their bodies in the image of their several kinds” (frag. 15). Xenophanes was a prophet of enlightenment seeking to liberate the human mind from the yoke of superstitions.

But he was not merely critical. He seems to have had a pantheistic conception of the All, something like what Spinoza was to refer to as ‘God-or-Nature’. He saw that whatever we may think of the “stuff” of the universe, we have to think of the primal reality as a mind that “sees all over, thinks all over, and hears all over” and “swayeth all things by the thought of his mind” (frag.25). But the rationality that was the great gift of the Greeks to humanity will not allow such a view to settle into a dogma. A philosopher, and that is the great merit of philosophy, knows that she or he is wrestling with an ultimate mystery and that she or he is clothing the world in a conceptual fabric of the philosopher’s own invention for her or his own satisfaction. Xenophanes admonishes us saying that “of course the clear and certain truth no man has seen nor will there be anyone who knows about the gods and what I say about all things. For even if, in the best case, one happened to speak just of what has been brought to pass, still he himself would not know. But opinion is allotted to all” (frag. 34). Thus Xenophanes combated not only the superstition of common beliefs but also the bigotry of self-conceited reason.

Metaphysically, Xenophanes seems to have anticipated Parmenides’s conception of the perfection of being in the all-encompassing One. “And he abideth ever in the selfsame place, moving not at all; nor doth it befit him to go about now hither now thither” (frag. 26). But if the fragments we possess of Parmenides’s poem do not entitle us to speak with confidence in

detail of his world-view, we are even more constricted in the case of Xenophanes. Let us be thankful that the few disjointed fragments that have reached us give us valuable insight into his notion of primal reality.

HERACLITUS

The search for the underlying *archê* of all things in itself implies of course that all things in the world around us are changeable and impermanent. This was not a discovery hit upon by Heraclitus. In the world of thought it seems that everything was there right from the beginning. We can find the germ of the most original thought of a recent philosopher in the earliest myths. But Heraclitus focused on the impermanence of things and gave it prominence. In his terse, graphic style he declares: “You cannot step twice into the same rivers; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you” (frag. 41, 42). Further, it is not only the river that has changed; we ourselves are not what we were before. But we would not even recognize the impermanence of things – nothing would be there for us to recognize – if there were not permanence of form: “We step and do not step into the same rivers; we are and are not” (frag. 81).

The universality of change means that the apparent separateness of things is illusory and that “all things are one” (frag. 1). That one form which is needed if universal change is to be intelligible Heraclitus finds in Fire: “All things are an exchange of Fire ... Fire lives the death of air, and air lives the death of fire; water lives the death of earth, earth that of water” (frag. 22). The thought that death and life are complementary is an instance of the principle that all opposites form a unity and pass into each other: “The way up and the way down is one and the same” (frag. 69). This is also expressed in the thought that “war is common to all and strife is justice, and that all things come into being and pass away through strife” (frag. 62). The

whole, the world, is held together by the tension of opposites, “Men do not know how what is at variance agrees with itself. It is an attunement of opposite tensions, like that of the bow and the lyre” (frag. 45).

The unity in diversity, the continuity in all change, is clearly affirmed in this fragment: “God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, surfeit and hunger; but he takes various shapes, just as oil, when it is mingled with spices, is named according to the savour of each” (frag. 67). This could have come straight from a Brahmanic text. In another fragment we read, “The one is made up of all things, and all things issue from the one” (frag. 10). But although all things have one source and are ultimately of one nature, it seems that Heraclitus believed that every particular thing is unique. Did Heraclitus have an inkling of Leibniz’ principle of the identity of indiscernibles? I find this suggested by: “If all things were turned to smoke, the nostrils would distinguish them” (frag. 37).

Heraclitus tells us, “It is wise to hearken, not to me but to my word, and to confess that all things are one” (frag. 1). Again he says, “I have sought for myself” (frag. 80). This epitomizes what is original and most significant in Greek thought. Heraclitus does not ask us to listen to him as an authority, either on his own account or as bringing us a message from some higher source, but to listen to his word, to consider the thought-content and let our own mind decide whether it finds it satisfactory or not. This is that bit of a difference that makes all the difference between the best of Egyptian, Babylonian, Indian, or Hebrew myths on the one hand, and even the wildest of Greek fancies on the other hand, the difference that gave us philosophical thinking, the difference that – as I said somewhere – turned human beings from thinking animals into rational animals.

Heraclitus speaks of a *logos* that “is true evermore” (frag. 2) and of all things coming to pass in accordance with this *logos*.

We find the same thought in another fragment, “Wisdom is one thing. It is to know the thought by which all things are steered through all things” (frag. 19). This is what all philosophy, at any rate all metaphysical philosophy, is all about. For, leaving aside Being as the ultimate irrationality that we have no choice but to acquiesce in and invent myths to fool ourselves into thinking we are accounting for it, all metaphysics has been a search for a *law* in accordance with which all things come to pass. This is indeed an imperious demand of the human mind. But it has proved a Holy Grail quest, from which, to my mind, philosophers will not rest till they realize that what they should look for is not a *law*, but a principle, a dimension of Reality, which I call the Principle of Creativity. It amounts to acknowledging that Reality is originally creative, the very being of Reality is nothing but that creativity; and the evidence for that creativity we find in our own activity whenever we act in moral spontaneity or in artistic creativity. For indeed we know nothing of reality but what we find in ourselves.

The inanity of the idea of a created world was clear to Heraclitus. “This world, which is the same for all, no one of gods or men has made, but it was ever, is now, and ever shall be an ever-living Fire, with measures of it kindling, and measures going out” (frag. 20).

Heraclitus acknowledged the unfathomable mystery of the soul: “You will not find the boundaries of soul by travelling in any direction, so deep is the measure of it” (frag. 71). This is in harmony with his warning against the vanity of human wisdom: “The wisest man is an ape compared to God” (frag. 98).

Many of the fragments of Heraclitus we find hard, almost impossible, to interpret. This is partly due to the fact that Heraclitus glories in the enigmatic. “The lord whose is the oracle at Delphoi neither utters nor hides his meaning, but shows it by a sign” (frag. 11). But it is also no doubt in part due to the fact that

there are presuppositions of his cultural milieu of which we are ignorant and also to the fact that we have the disjointed fragments bereft of an illuminating context.

When Heraclitus says, "The sun is new every day" (frag. 32), we have no right to assume that he foolishly supposes the sun to be dumped somewhere in the evening and a new sun to be produced each morning. Such a thought would hardly be in harmony with: "The sun will not overstep his measures; if he does, the Erinyes, the handmaids of Justice, will find him out" (frag. 29). The statement that the sun "is new every day" follows intelligibly from the view that all things are constantly changing; our modern scientists would readily affirm that the sun this second is not what it was a second earlier.

Heraclitus, no less than Xenophanes, ridicules popular superstitions, beliefs, and practices. "And they pray to these images, as if one were to talk with a man's house, knowing not what gods or heroes are" (frag. 126). "They vainly purify themselves by defiling themselves with blood, just as if one who had stepped into the mud were to wash his feet in mud. Any man who marked him doing thus, would deem him mad" (frag. 100).

PARMENIDES

Anaximander had already said of the primary reality, the Infinite, that it is "eternal and ageless" and that it "encompasses all the worlds". Xenophanes had said of the one reality, the one god, that he "abideth ever in the selfsame place, moving not at all" (frag. 26). While Heraclitus emphasized the mutability of all things, Parmenides emphasized the permanence of what is real. Any statement contradicting this cannot, in strict reasoning, be true and cannot signify anything real. "Only Being is, Not-Being is not and cannot be thought" (frag. 4, 6f). From this first principle Parmenides concluded that the real is One, indivisible,

motionless, homogeneous, and unchangeable. The real of Parmenides, the One that IS, and IS because it can be thought, that is whole, complete, self-contained, self-sufficient, is an ideal of perfection – in it the idea of Wholeness was born – the ideal of Reality, a Reality that is beyond “what is there”, “what is the case”, “what there is”, that is distinct from all that the inventors of such phrases know as reality or mean by reality.

In the second part of his philosophical poem Parmenides gives an account of the world of becoming, which cannot be regarded as truth but merely as opinion. It is not clear how this area of seeming or opinion is related to the first, the realm of reality and truth. Plato, who was deeply impressed by both Heraclitus and Parmenides, shows profound reverence for the latter. He sees the whole perceptual world sunk in the Heraclitian flux. It can never be the object of genuine knowledge, but only of opinion. The content of our most exact empirical science is completely soaked in relativity and contingency. Plato found refuge for knowledge in the constancy and immutability of the forms of the intelligible realm. For a time, a long time, he chanted paeans of praise for the constancy and immutability of the intelligible forms, but he knew that the realm of true being and the realm of becoming do not constitute two separate universes but must be united; that the One cannot be without the Many, nor can the Many be apart from the One. In the *Parmenides* he showed (and reverentially made the great man himself do it) that the dictates of strict reason, which Parmenides admonished us to adhere to, if followed consistently, show that the One engenders the Many, that Being is heavy with Not-Being, that “whether there is or is not a One, both that One and the Others alike are and are not, and appear and do not appear to be, all manner of things in all manner of ways, with respect to themselves and to one another” (*Parmenides*, 166c, tr.

Cornford). In the *Symposium* Plato had spoken of *tokos en tōi kalōi* as, we may say, a first principle of reality; in the *Republic* the Form of the Good which transcends knowledge and being is yet the source of being and of knowledge; in the *Sophist* the finality of the forms is put in question and, with an apology to 'Father Parmenides', *dunamis* is affirmed to be the essence of reality; in the *Philebus* reality is found to be multi-dimensional; and in the *Timaeus* God creates the world by the necessity of God's own goodness. This section was meant to be devoted to Parmenides but I have been speaking of Plato. That had to be so because it was in Plato that the One of Parmenides found completion.

Parmenides can justly be called the father of rationalism, for he proclaims that "it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be" (frags. 2 and 3). But this statement is not as innocently simple as it appears to be. If only what can be thought by us can be for us, then all the reality we can know can be nothing but the reality we think up for ourselves. The principle of rationalism promises us dominion without end over all that be but also tells us that all the reality we can ever know is our own thought.

EMPEDOCLES

I will only touch briefly on two more pre-Socratics before moving on to the main part of this work. Empedocles, it seems, attempted to reconcile the views of Heraclitus and of Parmenides, to unite ceaseless change with eternal immutability. "I shall tell thee a twofold tale. At one time it grew to be one only out of many; at another, it divided up to be many instead of one." He offered a cosmology in which the mixture and separation of unchangeable elements produces change. Two forces are responsible for the motions which bring about the change: Love, which joins the elements together, and Strife, which separates

them. These two forces alternate in dominance, so that we have one state of the world where all elements are blissfully united and another state dominated by Strife where the elements are completely separated. “And these things never cease continually changing places, at one time all uniting in one through Love, at another each borne in different directions by the repulsion of Strife.”

ANAXAGORAS

In the *Phaedo* Socrates relates how he enthused and was filled with high hopes when he heard someone reading from the book of Anaxagoras, saying that Mind produces order in the world and is the cause of everything, and how his hopes were dashed when he read the book. This story tells us more about Socrates than about Anaxagoras. Socrates sanguinely expected to find in Anaxagoras confirmation of what he himself had already been convinced of about the role of Mind in human life. But Anaxagoras was not dealing with the problems that were the prime concern of Socrates. His philosophy was a cosmology that sought answers for the kind of questions that Socrates had resolutely renounced.

Like Empedocles, Anaxagoras wanted to find a middle way between the ceaseless Heraclitian flux and the absolute Parmenidean immobility. He thought that all coming into being must be a combination of pre-existing elements and all ceasing to be a separation of such elements. What made the elements so move to combine or to separate? Our modern scientists, and even more so our modern philosophers, find no problem here: the elements move themselves, and our modern scientists and philosophers ridicule Idealist ignoramuses who do not know about inertia! To answer the question that our scientists find otiose but the philosophical mind cannot evade, Anaxagoras said that Mind moved and ordered everything.

CHAPTER THREE

SOCRATES

I

It was in Socrates and Plato – any separation of these, any line drawn between them, can only be arbitrary and conjectural – that the philosophical quest came to fruition and the goddess Philosophia sprang forth in full beauty and full vigor as Athene sprang forth fully armed from the forehead of Zeus.

Let us review the life and thought of Socrates in some detail and I will not apologize for any reiteration or repetition, whether it be repetition within these pages or repetition of things I said elsewhere in my writings, for we are dealing with what I believe to be of the utmost importance not only for philosophy, but also for the good of humankind.

In his trial, as represented by Plato in the *Apology*, Socrates tells his judges that he was fulfilling a mission given him by divine commission and if they were to tell him that they would let

him off on condition that he should cease to inquire and to speculate in his customary manner or else he should die, his reply would be:

“Men of Athens, I honour and love you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting any one of you whom I meet and saying to him after my manner: You my friend, ... are you not ashamed of heaping up the largest amount of money and honour and reputation, and caring so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all? And if the person with whom I am arguing says: Yes, but I do care; then I shall not leave him nor let him go at once, but proceed to interrogate and examine and cross-examine him, and if I think that he has no virtue in him but only says that he has, I shall reproach him with undervaluing the most precious, and overvaluing the less”

(Apology, 29d-e, Jowett’s translation).

We can cover the whole of Socrates’ philosophy by commenting on this passage phrase by phrase. But I shall begin with the phrase “interrogate and examine and cross-examine”. Socrates fulfilled his divine mission by questioning and cross-examining people and exhorting them to care about “wisdom and truth”. He may speak of “teaching philosophy”, but by that he did not mean giving any instruction or inculcating any doctrine. He expressly and emphatically denied that. By “teaching philosophy” he meant nothing other than impressing on everyone he encountered the necessity of philosophizing, of thinking for oneself. Why was that so?

At the base of Socrates’ philosophy was the insight that human beings live, strictly speaking, their characteristically

human life in a world of ideas and ideals of their own creation. This is strictly so for every human being in so far as she or he lives and behaves consciously. This is not belied by the fact that human beings – all human beings most of the time and most human beings all the time – are swayed by forces and influences outside their conscious sphere. Much of this is inevitable and much of it is necessary for the common purposes of life. But what sets the human race apart from the rest of the animal kingdom is that they can and do behave under the influence of ideas — purposes, values, beliefs, expectations. Individuals inherit these ideas, ideals, and valuations and in time these get entangled and become obscured. When our ideas are confused our behavior is erratic. Socrates, in interrogating, examining, and cross-examining a person wanted to help that person disentangle and clear up her or his store of ideas.

In the elenctic discourses, Socrates investigates the meaning of this or that particular virtue. Invariably we find that no single virtue can stand in separation of other virtues. We find that all virtue is one and we further find that the one virtue is also one with knowledge. But when we ask, What knowledge?, knowledge of what?, we find that it is not any specific knowledge. If we end by saying it is knowledge of the good and then ask, But what is the good?, we find that nothing is good apart from knowledge and we are again led to identify the good with knowledge. Let us say then that the good is what we arrive at when we follow unhampered reason to the seat of active, creative intelligence.

The Greek word *aretê*, which is commonly translated ‘virtue’, is a much wider and much richer concept than ‘virtue’. It signifies the proper function, the proper power, the proper excellence of a thing, the thing that a thing can do best. The *aretê* of a knife is to cut, the *aretê* of a bee is to make honey. Socrates believed that the *aretê* of a human being is to act intelligently. To

act intelligently is to be governed in all we say and all we do by reason. Our worth and our wellbeing are in that inner thing in us we may indifferently call mind, reason, or soul. That inner reality of ours flourishes when we do what is morally right and withers when we do what is morally wrong. That sums up the whole of Socrates' moral philosophy.

Socrates would have wholeheartedly endorsed Spinoza's doctrine of action and passion, as when Spinoza says: "Our mind acts certain things and suffers others: namely, in so far as it has adequate ideas, thus far it necessarily acts certain things, and in so far as it has inadequate ideas thus far it necessarily suffers certain things" (*Ethics*, Part III, Prop. I, tr. Andrew Boyle). To my mind, this is just what Socrates meant to show in his examination of the notion of *akrasia* in the *Protagoras* (352d-357e), where he argued that to be overpowered with desire or fear or other passion essentially amounts to making a wrong judgment.

For Socrates what gives a human being her or his distinctive character as a human being is what he regularly referred to as that within us which thrives by doing good deeds and deteriorates by doing bad deeds. That thing within us may indifferently be called the soul or the mind. That is our inner reality and our true essence. It is when, and only when, we exercise the proper function, the proper excellence, of our inner reality that we are living truly as humans. In the *Crito*, when the good old Crito goes to try for the last time to exhort Socrates to accept that his friends arrange for him to escape from his prison where he awaited execution, Socrates begins his argument with Crito by saying, "I am and always have been one of those natures which must be guided by reason, whatever the reason may be which upon reflection appears to me to be the best" (46b, tr. Jowett). Further on he asks, "... will it be worth living, if that higher part of man be corrupted which is improved by justice and depraved by

injustice?" (47e, tr. Jowett). He lays it down emphatically that we must do no wrong, nor when injured injure in return, nor do evil in return for evil. So when in the *Gorgias* he affirms that it is better to suffer wrong than to commit wrong, that is fully consistent with his position: suffering wrong injures one's exterior but committing wrong injures one's interior. Polus asks him whether he thinks Archelaus of Macedonia or the Great King of Persia happy or wretched; Socrates answers that he cannot say since he does not know how either of them stands with regard to education and righteousness. When Polus finds that incredible Socrates simply asserts that a decent and good man or woman is happy, an unrighteous and evil one is wretched (*Gorgias*, 470e). Erudite scholars find that paradoxical. In the context of Socrates' outlook it is fully rational and consistent.

When the Cynics, followed by the Stoics, defined philosophy as *askêsis arêtes*, the practice of virtue, they were true to their Socratic heritage.

II

Socrates' interrogations and cross-examinings, as represented in Plato's early dialogues, have been grossly misunderstood. Aristotle read those early dialogues in the light of his own deep interest in logical questions and concluded that Socrates was seeking to find definitions for various terms. This, to my mind, is a completely wrong reading that has been accepted by scholars as unquestionable truth. If it were not for the daunting authority of Aristotle, any intelligent reader of the dialogues would have been able to see that in those dialogues not one definition has ever been reached, which would be very odd if Plato wanted to tell us that that was what Socrates had been after all his life. The so-called elenctic dialogues invariably end in *aporia*, perplexity. That is not accidental. In the course of the Socratic examination Socrates helps to clear entanglements, confusions, and obscurities in the thought of his

interlocutor, the final end being to remove the *amathia*, the compounded ignorance which is not simply not knowing but thinking one knows what one does not know. The examination is intended to end, not in a definition, but expressly in that *aporia* that hopefully may lead the interlocutor to realize that, for understanding, one has to look into one's own mind, clear it of dross, put its contents in order, see one's ideas in the self-evidence of the ideas themselves, and see one's mind in the light of one's own inner reality.

The indefinability of the form, disclosed in the *aporia* invariably produced by the Socratic elenchus, which students of philosophy from Aristotle onwards have mistaken for a mere failure to reach the desired definition, is well brought out in Whitehead's affirmation that "each eternal object is an individual which, in its own peculiar fashion, is what it is. This particular individuality is the individual essence of the object, and cannot be described otherwise than as being itself" (*Science and the Modern World*, p.186). This only expresses in different words what Socrates tells us in the 'autobiographical' passage in the *Phaedo* (95a-102a) and which is summed up in his prophetic dictum: "It is by (the idea of) beauty that all beautiful things are beautiful".

III

Chaerephon was an enthusiastic, perhaps fanatic, admirer of Socrates. "He went to Delphi", as we are told in the *Apology*, "and boldly asked the oracle ... whether anyone was wiser than [Socrates] was, and the Pythian prophetess answered that there was no man wiser" (21a, tr. Jowett). In the *Apology* this is given as what led Socrates to start cross-examining various persons to test the truth of the oracle. This may have been a dramatization on the part of Plato. What is of true significance and lasting value is the interpretation Socrates put on the oracle. He tells his judges that, after searching assiduously for the meaning of the oracle, he

came to the conclusion that the god meant to say, “He, O men, is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing” (23b, tr. Jowett). This is what I call Socrates’ principle of philosophical ignorance, and I find it has more than one dimension. These dimensions may not have all been clearly defined in Socrates’ mind, but I find them consistently flowing from his position.

First, as the Socratic elenchus regularly ending in *aporia* shows, it is futile to seek the meaning of any idea – not a usable definition good for specific purposes but a meaning that gives understanding – in terms of anything outside the idea. The meaning of an idea can only be found in the self-evidence of the idea: the idea is a creation of the mind that gives meaning to things; it is not a thing to be found outside the mind. This Socratic insight is what Wittgenstein, in his later period, was groping at when he said that the meaning is the use.

Second, the knowledge that we can gather from the world outside us cannot give us insight into the reality of anything or into the purposes and values that determine the meaning and value of our life. This insight can only be found within our own minds. Thus it is only when we find out that all of our knowledge of the external world is as nothing that we realize that, to find meaning and value in our life, we have to turn to our own inner reality.

Third – and this is the dimension that Plato developed – we find that all determinate formulations of thought, even when giving expression to insight into our inner reality, are imperfect and open to contradiction, so that, if our truths are not to turn into falsehoods, we have constantly to discover the imperfection and contradictoriness of our conclusions, thus destroying their foundations. This is a theme that I develop further in the chapter on Plato and further on in this book.

IV

Socrates was primarily interested in the ideas and ideals that govern human behavior and determine the quality of a person's life. It may have been this that led him to draw the important distinction between the intelligible realm of ideas and the perceptible realm of the outer world, including our own body. This in turn led to a most important distinction, a distinction that is of the gravest import for understanding the proper natures of philosophical thinking and scientific thinking respectively. In the *Phaedo* (95a-102a) Plato makes Socrates give us an autobiographical sketch the lessons of which students of philosophy have not yet absorbed. Among other vital things in that seminal passage of the *Phaedo* Socrates tells us that in his youth he was interested in the study of natural causes, but that he gave up that study, not out of any indifference to its value or importance, but because he found out that the investigation of things in the outer world cannot yield answers to the questions of purpose and value that he was primarily interested in. Answers to these questions can only be found by examining the ideas in our own minds. The investigation of things, Socrates found out, can tell us how things are in the outer world. The examination of our ideas, and only the examination of our ideas, can tell us about the value of things, about what meaning things have for us, about what purposes and what ends we may pursue. Socrates here clearly tells us that there is one kind of question that scientific investigation and only scientific investigation can answer and another kind of question that philosophical examination and only philosophical examination can answer. Borrowing a distinction introduced by William James in Lecture I of *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (p.17) we may designate scientific statements as existential judgments and philosophical statements as spiritual judgments. This is an insight that neither philosophers

nor scientists have yet absorbed. A clear understanding of this will put an end to endless false meanderings and blind gropings in both science and philosophy. Hence it is a theme that I insist on and come back to again and again in this book as in all of my books.

V

In Socrates were united two traits, two drives, that defined the essence of his spiritual being: moral integrity and intellectual integrity. When he asserted the identity of virtue and wisdom he was not theorizing; he was giving expression to his own inner reality. He saw himself basically as a human being; he saw the proper nature of a human being as constituted by ideas and ideals engendered in the mind and by the mind; those ideas and ideals are a human being's whole essence and whole life; the mind that is the locus and the fount of those ideas and ideals is the reality, the inner reality, of a human being. When the ideas and ideals are wholesome, well-ordered, clear and consistent, that amounts to moral wellbeing; when they are unhealthy and confused that amounts to moral disease. How could virtue and wisdom be anything but one and the same thing? How could a wise person not prefer to submit to any injustice – injustice that may harm her or his exterior but can never touch her or his interior – rather than commit injustice that would damage her or his interior reality?

The world for Socrates fell into two distinct spheres: on the one side, the outer world that we perceive through our senses, and on the other side, the ideas in our mind including the forms in which we clothe even those things that reach us from outside. That is the distinction between the perceptible and the intelligible that was to have such an important role in the Socratic-Platonic thought-system. It little matters if Socrates borrowed this distinction from Parmenides, from the Pythagoreans, or from

further back. In philosophy we all use building blocks that we ultimately owe to the primeval wrestlings of the human mind with the mysterious happenings without and within the body. The originality is in the structures we erect using those building blocks.

Socrates concerned himself solely with the intelligible sphere, in the first place because it is the intelligible sphere that determines the meaning, purpose, and value of human life. But Socrates also developed from the primary distinction between the intelligible and the perceptible another far-reaching distinction that philosophers and scientists have failed fully to understand and to absorb, a failure that has caused and continues to cause both philosophy and science grave damage. Socrates found that the investigation of things outside us, the things of the perceptible sphere, on the one hand, and the investigation of things relating to our inner reality, things of the intelligible realm, on the other hand, are amenable to radically distinct methods and, more importantly, answer radically different sets of questions. The confounding of these two areas of inquiry can only lead us astray.

Perhaps this was what Heraclitus had in mind when he said, "The learning of many things teacheth not understanding", and again, "Pythagoras, son of Mnesarchos, practiced scientific inquiry beyond all other men, and making a selection of these writings, claimed for his own wisdom what was but a knowledge of many things and an imposture" (frag. 129). He states this more explicitly in saying, "Of all whose discourses I have heard, there is not one who attains to understanding that wisdom is apart from all" (frag. 108). My purpose in giving these supportive views of Heraclitus is not simply scholarly or historic. I want to emphasize the reasonableness and importance of an insight of Socrates that has been and continues to be strangely ignored by students of philosophy and that we badly need to recall.

VI

A sensation is a happening on the physiological plane of our being. It becomes a perception when clothed in a concept. There is no present percept without a concept, and there is no primary concept without a percept present or recollected. This is what Kant affirms when he says, “Gedanken ohne Inhalt sind leer, Anschauungen ohne Begriffe sind blind.” It is by an idea created by the human mind that a thing, any thing, obtains meaning. In the *Phaedo* we find Socrates saying, “It seems to me, if there is anything beautiful besides beauty in itself, then it is beautiful by nothing other than that it shares (*metechei*) of that beauty” (100c). A thing in the outer world only has a specific character when the human mind has given it that character. There is no number in the outer world. Three deer standing together in the wood are to the hunting dog a visual configuration but to the hunter they are three. There is no three in nature. Three is a creation of the human mind.

It is true that, as Whitehead says, “consciousness is the crown of experience, only occasionally attained, not its necessary base” (*Process and Reality*, p.267), but it is this consciousness, this immediacy of awareness, that gives us our identity as human beings, our special character, and our proper value. Our moments of creative intelligence are rare, spasmodic, faltering occurrences, but they constitute our dignity and our glory and it is in these and in these alone that we commune with reality and share in eternity.

“Modern physical science,” Whitehead tells us, “with its dependence on the exact notions of mathematics, began with the foundation of Greek Geometry” (*Process and Reality*, p.302). He then tells us that the first definition of Euclid’s *Elements* runs, “A point is that of which there is no part.” Good, there are no parts to a point, but what is a point? No one can say, because of nothing you

can say nothing. No point has ever been nor can ever be found in the world. The second definition of Euclid's *Elements* runs, "A line is breadthless length." (Whitehead states that he is quoting Heath's translation.) Again we are given something that is nothing and has never been and can never be anywhere in the world and we sin in saying that it is and even in referring to it as 'it', and it is defined solely by what it does not have. And these nothings, we are assured, are the foundations of modern physical science. And this assurance is neither a prank nor a joke nor a riddle nor an impostor's hoax. Modern science is based on fictions, pure creations of the human mind, that have no actuality and no existence in the world but have being and reality conferred upon them by a fiat of the mind. And these nothings, these pure forms created by the mind, are what lend intelligibility, meaning, and value to the actual existents of the outside world. The intelligibility, meaning, and value are from the mind and are within the mind. The mind is the locus of all meaning and all value and all reality. Thus did the gods whisper in Socrates' inner ear.

VII

Erudite scholars chide Plato's Socrates for identifying *to kalon* (the beautiful) and *to agathon* (the good). When Socrates moves in argument from *to kalon* to *to agathon* he is not sophistically taking advantage of an ambiguity in the Greek language but is resorting to a profound insight rooted in the language. Thus Whitehead says, "There is a natural affinity between order and goodness" (*Modes of Thought*, p.75). Earlier in the same book he asserts that philosophy does not rest on proof but on self-evidence, and self-evidence is an aesthetic quality. It is the quality that the Socratic dialectic is intended to lead to, the quality that the *aporia* produced by the dialectic is meant to evoke.

Strictly and literally speaking, we actually live and move and act in a complex, intricate web of thoughts. This cannot be over-emphasized. All that we refer to as facts, all events, all happenings, all fixed, solid objects, all, can only enter our lives, can only have any effect on us, can only be affected by us, can only be of any importance to us, as, and only in so far as, they are transformed, transmuted, by thoughts that have the whole of their being, the whole of their meaning, the whole of their reality in our minds. This is so basically true that it is hard, very hard, for us to be aware of it. To be human – good or bad – is to live in such a world of ideas. This is the intelligible realm that Socrates knew to be constitutive of our specific being as human beings. The Stoic philosophers first absorbed this lesson. They knew that we are subject to brute external forces which may crush us, annihilate us, but cannot determine our attitude, our reaction to them. We shape our inner world but remain part of the given outer world, and remain subject to the powers of that outer world, and the powers and forces of that outer world can destroy our outer being but cannot form our inner being contrary to our own convictions and thoughts. Epictetus and Aurelius affirm this again and again.

The true purport of the Socratic elenchus is the disclosure of the self-evidence of the idea, and the final goal of the *aporia* is to lead the interlocutor to look inwards, to find her or his inner reality, the only reality for us. This is the insight T. S. Eliot catches in these lines:

We shall never cease from exploration
 And the end of all our exploring
 Will be to arrive where we started
 And know the place for the first time.

T. S. Eliot – “Little
 Gidding”, *Four Quartets*.

The goal of the Socratic examination is the understanding that is the effulgence of the self-evidence of the values emanating from the integrity of our inner reality.

VIII

We are indebted to Socrates for the concept of the soul as the inner reality of a human being. For the soul in Socrates' thought is transmuted from the primitive notion of a ghost that creeps out of the body to roam about, from the mindless shadow of the Homeric Hades, into the essence and inner reality of a human being. The early founders of Christianity incorporated this refined concept in their outlook, and the incorporation and dissemination of this concept was one of the greatest services of Christianity to human civilization. But I will not go further into the Socratic concept of the soul at this point since I am devoting a separate chapter to the concept as well as dealing with it also in the chapter on Plato.

CHAPTER FOUR

PLATO

I

Plato wedded the Socratic distinction between the intelligible and the perceptible to the Parmenidean separation of the Way of Truth from the Way of Seeming. In the sphere of the Heraclitian flux there is no Being and there can be no Knowledge but there is only becoming and opinion. To attain knowledge, the mind produces forms that lend permanence and meaning to the fleeting and meaningless evanescences of the external world.

In the first part of the *Parmenides*, Socrates having introduced the notion of forms to counter the logical difficulties raised by Zeno, and having instanced similarity and difference, unity and multiplicity as such forms, 'Parmenides' asks him if he also says there are forms of justice, beauty, goodness. Socrates has no doubt about this. Next Parmenides inquires about 'man', 'fire', 'water'. Socrates is hesitant. So what about 'mud' and 'dirt'? Plato pictures the young Socrates as shocked. Socrates was certainly primarily interested in the moral forms, but the conception of intelligible forms that confer meaning on things that, bereft of the light shed by the mind, are meaningless in

themselves, easily extends to all things. Was Plato suggesting that Socrates only later in life came to extend the notion of forms to all things? Was he intimating that it was he, Plato, who gave the forms this wider application? Or did he intend this episode in the dialogue, culminating in the chiding of Socrates by ‘Parmenides’, merely for the edification of his readers and students? However that may be, the concept of intelligible forms (*noêta eidê*) was fundamental to Plato’s thought from beginning to end. Since this is a theme that has become shrouded in much futile scholarly controversy, I have to state clearly that I am speaking of the concept of the intelligible forms that is central and basic to the whole Platonic outlook, and not of the so-called ‘theory of forms’ which turns about Plato’s early experimentations with how to relate the forms to the percepta in a theoretically satisfactory formulation. It is these formulations, and not the concept of the forms, that ‘Parmenides’ shreds in the first part of the dialogue named after the great man.

Plato did not write any systematic philosophical treatise. He would not. He plainly states in the *Phaedrus* (274c-278b) and in the Seventh Epistle (341c-d) that the profoundest philosophical insights cannot be put in writing. He wrote dramatic dialogues. Why? Perhaps the early dialogues were intended primarily to keep the memory of Socrates alive. Even so, it is in those early dialogues, the ones up to and including the *Republic*, that Plato gives us the spirit of philosophy, the alpha and the omega of all philosophizing. Philosophy is philosophizing and nothing but philosophizing, and philosophizing, for Plato, is just the *process* of asking and answering questions, the dialectic process. Philosophical insight, let us say, is only to be had in this living, creative activity in itself, not in any result thereof. Philosophy is the life of creative intelligence; philosophical insight is the self-consuming fire of creative intelligence.

We may sum up Plato's legacy in two things: his conception of philosophy as the life of philosophizing and his vision of Reality. These two features are intertwined and cannot be completely separated. The whole of this book is an attempt to clarify and to develop these two aspects of Plato's thought.

Heraclitus has opened our eyes to the fleeting nature of all things in the world including our own bodies. All things are flowing, perpetually perishing, perpetually vanishing. There can be no knowledge where you cannot say of anything 'it is this' or 'it is such'. And even in the delusory permanence that our senses represent to us, without a discriminating mind, all things are mixed up. This is very difficult for us to picture to ourselves. Our eyes have been trained to see things sorted out in distinct items. Also our hearing has been trained to break up the flow of noise into distinct sounds. Listen to a person speaking a language that is completely foreign and new to you; you cannot separate out words or syllables from the stream of sounds that your ears receive. Only when the mind projects distinct forms on the visual mishmash or the oral flux do you see things or hear meaningful sounds.

There is no intelligibility and no understanding other than what the mind infuses into things. Locke's ideas dropping into an empty and passive 'mind' register nothing in the non-existent mind, because if truly empty and passive then it is not a mind at all. Locke's ideas would be purely physiological happenings. They become meaningful only when the living, active mind gives them meaning. This is not how Plato puts it, but this is how we should understand Plato's forms that give meaning to the dumb things of the external world. That is why Plato regards all things apart from the light of the mind as mere passing shadows.

The world presented to us through our bodily impressions is constantly changing, constantly vanishing, it is veritably a world of fugitive shadows. It is the ideas, the forms, generated by the mind and found nowhere but in the mind, that give meaning to

the mutable things of the outer world and confer on them what reality they have. These ideas or forms are the only realities we know and they constitute all the knowledge we have.

When Plato represented Socrates' intelligibles as immutable forms he had perhaps a dual motive, the sanctity of the moral forms and the requirement of permanence for knowledge. From Aristotle onwards to the present day Plato has been chided, mocked, berated for the language he used in speaking of the forms in the early dialogues. I do not think it was necessary for Plato to insist so much on the immutability of the forms; I ground the eternity of the intelligible in the eternity of the active, creative mind. But both Whitehead and Santayana – two of the profoundest thinkers of the twentieth century – found it makes good sense, or rather found it necessary, to speak of forms as eternal. However we interpret that, does it not suggest to our learned pundits that Plato may not have been such a fool after all?

For Plato the realm of knowledge is the realm of reality. The two are inseparable. For as Parmenides taught: *tauto gar esti noein te kai einai*, "It is the same thing to be intelligible and to be". Plato refers to reality indifferently as *alêtheia*, *ousia*, *to on*, *ho estin*, *phusis*. Both the words *alêtheia* and *phusis* are traps to the unwary, for *alêtheia* does not mean 'truth' for Plato but 'reality' and *phusis* more often than not does not refer to phenomenal nature, the things we see and touch, but to the reality beyond that. In the central part of the *Republic* – which I see as the epitome not only of Plato's philosophy but of all philosophy – to explain what we should understand by 'a philosopher' Plato explains what we should understand by true knowledge and what we should understand by Reality. Indeed, I maintain that it is there that Plato gives us the philosophical concept of Reality.

A philosopher loves wisdom, but not any knowledge or all knowledge constitutes wisdom. The knowledge that is wisdom – the knowledge that Socrates in the elenctic discourses was

constantly indicating but never explicitly specifying – is not knowledge of the multiple mutable things of the outer world but of true being, and true being we find only in the meaningful, intelligible forms created by the mind, and ultimately we find that it is that very intelligence – *phronêsis*, *nous* – that engenders the intelligible forms, that is the only true being, the only reality, of which we have immediate knowledge.

The intelligible and only the intelligible has true being, and the intelligible realm is all that we know of reality, or, as Plato has it, what wholly is, is wholly knowable, what is not is in no way knowable, *to men pantelôs on pantelôs gnôston, mê on de mêdamêi pantêi agnôston* (*Republic*, 477a). (I leave aside for the moment the imperfect knowledge of the imperfect being of things, which Plato designates as *doxa*, opinion.)

But wisdom is not simply knowledge of many intelligibles, for the philosopher reaches out for the whole and the all, *tou holou kai pantos aei eporexesthai*, aspires to behold all time and all being, *theôria pantos men chronou, pasês de ousias* (486a). The wholeness, the oneness of vision, is characteristic of the philosophical outlook. As Plato puts it, he who sees things whole is a philosopher, he who doesn't, isn't, *ho men gar sunoptikos dialektikos, ho de mê ou* (537c). For the philosopher reality is perfection, and only the perfect is intelligible. This was the insight proclaimed by Parmenides. The imperfect, the partial, the mutable, calls for explanation; its claim to being is questionable. That is what the sages of Miletus realized and sought to remedy.

Plato pictures the philosopher's yearning for Reality in an oracular passage that I have quoted more than once before and that I cannot refrain from quoting once more:

“Would we not be making a reasonable defense, when we say that a true lover of knowledge, being by nature drawn towards communion with reality (*to on*), will not rest in the multiple

that appear to be (*epi tois doxazomenois einai pollois*), but goes on and does not slacken or peter out in his love, until he grasps the very essence of each reality (*auto ho estin hekastos tês phuseôs*) by that in his soul which it befits to grasp such – and it befits what is congenial –, approaching and uniting with (*plêsiasas kai migeis*) what has real being (*tôi onti ontôs*), begetting intelligence and reality (*noun kai alêtheian*), has understanding and true life and nourishment (*gnoiê te kai alêthôs zôiê kai trephoito*) and thus is delivered of his labor, but not before then?” (490a-b).

The philosopher aspires to communion with reality but his only way to that is to commune with that in his soul (mind) that is akin to true being. In other words, it is only by achieving wholeness and reality in herself or himself that a philosopher can behold Reality. In the *Symposium* Plato gives us another account of the journey of the philosopher to the vision of Reality, there represented by the Form of Beauty. There Diotima describes the progress of the lover of beauty from the love of one individual to beholding beauty in all, and from the love of bodily beauty to the contemplation of the abstract beauty of morals and ideals, and the love of knowledge and reason, “until on that shore he grows and waxes strong, and at last the vision is revealed to him” of absolute Beauty. Likewise in the *Republic* we find the philosopher beholding a realm of constant realities and living in harmony with and in the likeness of those realities (500b-c). But Socrates says that the philosopher has yet to go for the greatest of all studies, and when Adeimantus asks if there is a study greater than that of justice and the other virtues, Socrates says that the highest knowledge is the Form of the Good. (As I insisted in *Plato: An Interpretation*, Chapter Seven, Plato does not say, as translators make him say, that the highest knowledge is knowledge of the Form of the Good; Plato’s words make the

Form of the Good itself the highest knowledge: *hê tou agathou idea megiston mathêma.*)

When Socrates is pressed by his interlocutors to say what he thinks the Good is, he says he can only tell them of an offspring of the Good that is very much like it, *ekgonos te tou agathou ... kai homoiotatos ekeinôî* (506d-e). This is highly significant. No philosophic insight can be captured in a definite formulation of language or of thought. The philosophical insight is a spark that is ignited in the process of philosophizing and that can only be represented in a myth. But more of this when we come to speak of dialectic.

So Socrates gives an allegory in which the Sun is the offspring of the Good, and offspring and parent are alike. As the Sun, in the visible sphere, is the source of light and sight but is itself more than light and sight, so the Good, in the intelligible realm, is the source of mind and the intelligible, giving their reality to the things known and the power of knowing to the knowing mind, but itself transcends mind and the intelligible (508e-509a); and as the Sun not only gives visibility to the things seen but is the source of their generation and growth and nourishment, so the Good not only gives the things known their intelligibility but gives them their very being while it itself transcends being (509b). Clearly, we are here concerned with the ultimate metaphysical principle, the ground and origin of all being, the self-sufficing perfection that Parmenides proclaimed in the one word *esti*, which is enfeebled in the English rendering 'It is'. Why do I say it was Plato who gave us the philosophical conception of Reality, the conception of metaphysical Reality? Because while the Greek thinkers up to and including Parmenides (and all our modern pre-Kantian and post-Kantian system builders) speak of a Reality out there that they try to delineate in their various formulations, it was Plato who saw that it is our own conception of Reality – a Reality we can never know and can

never encapsulate in a definite formulation of thought or language – that gives us the reality we live in and that confers reality on all the content of our experience. If this sounds enigmatic, I beg the reader's patience; I will be reverting to the idea, clarifying and expanding it, throughout this book.

In presenting the allegory of the Sun and the Good Socrates complicates the picture somewhat by bringing in the difference between vision under the light of the Sun and under the dimmer light of the stars. As the eyes see clearly by the light of day but dimly by night, so the mind, in the presence of reality and true being (*alêtheia te kai to on*) enjoys understanding and reason, but in the region of the multiple and the mutable, it only has uncertain opinion (507c-508c). This is the gist of the theory of knowledge that Plato presents a little further on in the simile of the divided line and in the allegory of the Cave. I don't think I have to expand on this here because I have dealt with it at length elsewhere and because it will come in indirectly when I deal with epistemological questions in what follows.

I will pass over the rest of the rich central part of the *Republic* which I have described as the epitome of all philosophy, and will only stop at the notion of dialectic. The term 'dialectic' has had a variegated history. Aristotle and Kant have denigrated it, to name only the weightiest of its misusers. Others have given it widely different usages. In the works of Plato himself it does not constantly have the same sense. But at one place in the *Republic* Plato uses the word to signify something of the utmost importance.

Plato details the scheme of education for the philosopher which culminates in dialectic. Plato often designates the philosophical process by the phrase *dounai te kai apodexasthai logon*, to give and receive reason, which we may regard as an expanded expression of the term 'dialectic'. The dialectic process is a journey, an ascent like the ascent Diotima describes in the

Symposium. But as we should have learned from the Socratic elenchus, the understanding that is the expected fruit of that rational give and take does not come in the shape of a formulated conclusion or result but is that living exercise of intelligence itself. The insight gleaned in the dialectical process cannot be contained in a definite verbal formulation: all expression of philosophical insight is necessarily imperfect; and because all philosophical expression is always necessarily imperfect, every definite formulation of philosophical thought must be dialectically examined and shown to be imperfect. Dialectic, as Plato insists, must constantly destroy all our presuppositions. It is this ceaseless destruction and reformulation of the grounds of our thought that is the process of philosophizing. The reality the dialectical process leads us to is the reality of this intelligent activity within us that is all the reality of which we have immediate awareness. Accordingly, every philosophical statement purporting to give expression to philosophical insight can be no better than an allegory, a myth, and if taken as final truth turns into a superstition.

Hence Plato tells us in explicit and emphatic terms that dialectic must constantly destroy (*anairein*) all hypotheses (533c), and in the *Parmenides* – which our erudite scholars continue to regard as a baffling enigma – gives us a demonstration of this exercise of destructive dialectic. Any determinate meaning of the one is found to break up into the many and any determinate meaning of being is found to involve not-being. The end of the dialogue spells out the lesson as plainly as can be, where ‘Parmenides’ says that whatever we assume to be or not to be, it will seem that both the One and the Many, will be, both in relation to themselves and to each other, all things and no-thing (*Parmenides*, 166c). But we find that this insight developed in the *Parmenides* had already been adumbrated in the *Lysis*, as I pointed out in *Plato: An Interpretation* (Chapter VIII).

The Socratic intelligible realm became for Plato the poet a celestial sphere, the abode of heavenly Forms. The most celebrated pictures Plato has given us of that heaven are to be found in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*, but all the early dialogues sing paeans of praise for the reality, the purity, and the immutability of the Forms. But reality for Plato was never a static, lifeless thing. For him reality was always alive and active. *Erôs* was never far from the thought of Plato, and in the *Symposium* we learn that the end of Love is ‘giving birth in beauty’, *tokos en kalôi*. In the *Republic* we read that “a true philosophical nature aspires to what IS, does not tarry by the many particulars that are thought to be, but goes forth with no blunting and no slackening of her desire, until she grasps the essence of every reality by that in her soul to which it is becoming – namely, what is akin – to grasp that, approaching and mingling with what has true being, gives birth to reason and reality; enjoys knowledge and true life and is nourished, and then has relief of her birth pangs, but not before then” (490 a-b, quoted more fully above).

The Socratic dialectic was always a *maieusis* that brought living ideas to birth. The notion of *tokos en tõi kalõi* is central in the philosophy of the *Symposium*, and in the *Republic* the Form of the Good – the highest Reality – is imaged in the sun that fosters life and understanding. So when in the *Sophist* the Eleatic sage says, “I hold that the definition of being is simply power” (*Sophist* 247e, Jowett’s wording; see *Plato: An Interpretation*, Chapter Ten, Section IV) this does not represent any change in Plato’s position; it simply gives explicit expression to an insight that Plato’s earlier language tended to obscure. Further on in the *Sophist* the Eleatic ‘stranger’ finds that to refuse to allow change a place in reality amounts to saying that “life, soul, understanding have no place in that which is perfectly real” and that Reality “has neither life nor thought, but stands immutable in solemn

aloofness, devoid of intelligence" (Cornford's wording). In the *Timaeus* we are told that God, being good, "wished all things to be as like himself as possible" (29d-e, Lee). The world and all becoming is an outflow of the goodness of God. Plotinus truly saw that this was the mellow fruit of Plato's lifetime quest.

II

In the early and middle dialogues of Plato the drama is as important as the subject discussed, not only from the aesthetic and literary points of view but also philosophically. I tried to bring this out in *Plato's Memoirs* (2010). It seems there was a rather long break between the middle group (which may have ended with the *Republic*) and the latest group of dialogues, ending with the *Laws*. When Plato once more turned to producing literary works, there was a marked difference in manner and style. I don't think the weakening of his imaginative and literary powers is the whole explanation. I think he had a different purpose in writing these latest works. In the earlier works Plato threw at his readers riddles, challenging them to exercise their minds on them. In the late works he proposed themes, suggested ideas, experimented with methodologies, offered hypotheses for learned discussion, perhaps primarily among members of the Academy. If he still used the dialogue form that was perhaps partly because he had become used to it but also because it was still not his intention to give any 'finished' product or final 'truth' for acceptance, but to incite his readers to think for themselves.

In the *Sophist*, one of the latest group of dialogues, we may distinguish four different topics. The bulk of the dialogue is taken up with a lengthy and tedious exercise in the application of the method of definition by Collection and Division. In the course of this exercise the problem of negative statements is raised. The logical aspect of this problem is adequately discussed and plainly resolved, and yet our modern Analytical Philosophers continue to

produce tomes of erudite nonsense about it because they are too clever to see the simple truth. But Plato probes the ontological core of the problem with a penetrating examination of the meaning of reality, and in this connection gives us the simile of the Battle of the Gods and the Giants and goes into a critical examination of the position of the Friends of the Forms.

In the *Phaedrus*, which may possibly be one of the latest dialogues of the middle period, Plato had spoken of the method of Collection and Division. Plato was always experimenting with ideas, as he had for a time experimented with the idea of the participation of perceptible things in the intelligible Forms, and with the idea of reasoning from hypotheses as suggested in the *Phaedo*. It seems that Collection and Division caught on in the Academy; maybe Plato himself, at one time, or some members of the Academy expected much of it. Aristotle was to develop it into the method of definition by genus and differentiae. As a method of classification it had no philosophical significance. In Chapter Ten of *Plato: An Interpretation* I commented on this question at some length and suggested that “perhaps Plato intended the *Statesman* to show the imperfection and limitations of the method of Collection and Division”. I will say no more about it here and will move on to what I see as the weightier topics dealt with in the *Sophist*.

In the *Phaedo*, and more plainly in the *Republic*, we saw that the things of the external world are mere shadows. We said that justice and wisdom and the other virtues are what is real. In the first part of the *Parmenides* where the conception of the Forms is critically examined (I refuse to speak of a ‘theory’ or even of a ‘doctrine’ of Forms) ‘Parmenides’ argues that a complete separation of the intelligible Forms from the perceptible things would make the Forms lose all meaning for our life (133a-134e). Now in the course of seeking to define the sophist we encounter the problem of the nature of false

statements. To make a false statement is to say what is not, but Parmenides had said, “Never shall this be proved — that things that are not are”. We will have to examine the assertion of Parmenides and to show that what is not, somehow is, and what is, somehow is not. We have to be clear as to what we mean by what is in the sense of what is real. In our search for the meaning of reality we will have to engage in a battle with those who see no reality except in what is visible and palpable, a battle which Plato likens to the mythical Battle of the Gods and the Giants.

If both what we have always asserted to be real and the things that we saw as mere shadows alike have being, what is the common character that we see in both these classes and gives them their being? We find that this common character is nothing but *dunamis*, power, or let us say, activity. For anything to be it has either to be acting or to be receptive to some activity. To be receptive to activity is not a negative, lifeless passivity; it is a power of adaptability. (In *Science and the Modern World* Whitehead quotes a remarkable statement from Francis Bacon’s *Silva Silvarum* in which Bacon affirms that “all bodies whatsoever, though they have no sense, yet they have perception”. Bacon’s statement will be given more fully, together with Whitehead’s comments, in Chapter Nine below.) Even in the early dialogues, Plato often equates a given *aretê* with a specific *dunamis*. Already in the *Phaedo*, at 97c-d, Plato makes ‘to act or be acted upon’ equivalent to ‘to be’, *hopêi beltiston autôî estin ê einai ê allo hotioun paschein ê poiein*. (Translators and commentators commonly gloss over this. In his edition of the *Phaedo*, 1993, C. J. Rowe says, “... we should probably not hold Plato to the implication that ‘being’ is an instance of ‘being acted on or acting’”, as if that were a sin we may graciously condone.)

III

In the early and middle dialogues, particularly in the *Phaedo*, Plato laid much emphasis on the permanence and immutability of the Forms since he was concerned to highlight the affinity of the soul, the abode of the intelligible realm, to the eternity of the divine. Now certain 'Friends of the Forms' took the immutability of the Forms and their separateness from the perceptible realm too literally and too rigidly. In the *Sophist* the Eleatic sage proceeds to show them their error. If we say that the soul (mind) knows and understands and reasons, we find that all of that involves change. If we insist that the real is absolutely changeless we thereby deny life and thought to the real. "But tell me, in heaven's name: are we really to be so easily convinced that change, life, soul, understanding have no place in that which is perfectly real — that it has neither life nor thought, but stands immutable in solemn aloofness, devoid of intelligence?" (248e-249a, tr. Cornford.)

That Plato's thought came to be much occupied with the relation of the realm of reality to the realm of mutable things can be seen from the *Philebus*, a dialogue which purports to discuss the relative merits of opposed views of the good life but in which he finds occasion to go to the heart of the problem of Being and Becoming. He raises the problem of the one and the many; experiments with the Unlimited and the Limit as first principles; with the idea of measure and mixture to measure; and says that 'cause' is just another word for 'maker', which amounts to saying that behind or rather within all becoming there is living intelligence. But I have commented fully on the *Philebus* in Chapter Eleven of *Plato: An Interpretation* and do not think it necessary to discuss it further here.

The *Timaeus* is Plato's venture into cosmogony, the coming into being of the universe. Whitehead finds in Plato's *Timaeus* a

complement and a correction to Newton's cosmology. But here I am only concerned with certain insights of the highest philosophical value that we find strewn among the details of the cosmogony.

Early in the dialogue we are warned that we "should not look for anything more than a likely tale in such matters" (29d). This of course is in agreement with Plato's view that all 'knowledge' relating to the perceptible realm can be no more than opinion. This is a position that I develop and emphasize throughout this book.

We are told that the Maker (*dēmiourgos*) made the world because he was good and wanted all things to be as like himself as possible (29d-e). This amounts to saying that at the foundation of the world we have a good will. Indeed, wherefrom do we have the ideas of creation and creativity? Naturally from our own creativity. When we are creative, when we are free and act spontaneously, we create because we love and we create what we love. So we see the making of the universe as an act of love, *tokos en kalôi*. You say this is anthropomorphism. Of course it is. You say it is bad science. I say, No, it is not science at all. Science will never tell us WHY the world was made; scientists who think they can one day find out the WHY are fooling themselves. Who then can tell us? No one. That is something we can only dream and have to dream to save our world from being a tale signifying nothing.

The *dēmiourgos* does not make the cosmos out of nothing. He reduces the primeval disorder to order (30a). The absolutely simple, absolutely motionless Parmenidean One leaves the world of becoming unexplained and unexplainable. Living creative reality cannot be conceived as simple. It has to be multi-dimensional. In the *muthos* Plato gives the *dēmiourgos* a universe in a state of inharmonious and disorderly motion to work on. Later he introduces the metaphysical notion of the *hupodochê*,

commonly translated ‘receptacle’, but it is more akin to content than container. Plato describes it as the “nurse of all becoming”. The whole process of becoming is a living activity, no element in it is inert, the ‘matter’ formed shares in the forming.

IV

Plato devoted the last years of his life to writing his longest book, the *Laws*. The reader may wonder that I have said nothing of the *Laws*. In *Plato: An Interpretation* too I said nothing of the *Laws* except incidentally. In the preface to that book I wrote: “One topic that readers of my book will find conspicuous by its absence is politics. I do not believe that politics is a subject for philosophy proper. A philosopher as a person living in our actual world will necessarily be concerned with politics. She or he will, hopefully, bring to her or his politics the philosophic habit of mind, the concern for values nurtured by philosophy, but not any philosophically established political principles. There is no such thing. Plato as an Athenian and as a Hellene was earnestly concerned with the politics of his time and world. Whole libraries have been written about his political thought. I have nothing worthwhile to add in that area and I keep my peace.” However I will now add the following lines:

Plato’s politics were and had to be a product of his time, his milieu, his circumstances, his personal experiences, his personal temperament: they were not an integral part of his philosophy. In studying Plato’s views on politics, including his views on education and on the censorship of literature and art, we are not studying philosophy but looking into political history; we do not find there the inspiring insights of a creative thinker, but the practical fumbblings of a man embroiled in the imperfections of our actual world. For myself, I can only reiterate what I said in the concluding words in the lines quoted above: I have nothing worthwhile to add in that area and I keep my peace.

CHAPTER FIVE

ARISTOTLE

I have frequently been hard on Aristotle. My complaint against Aristotle is twofold. First, I hold him responsible for propagating a distorted understanding of the Socratic elenchus and of Plato's doctrine of Forms. Secondly, he gave a wrong direction to metaphysics. I will not here return to these points since I have repeatedly dealt with them in my earlier writings as well as elsewhere in this book. I will only try to give a brief account of Aristotle's contribution to our quest for Reality. But first I have to add another item to my inventory of complaints, and it is one where I confess I am wronging Aristotle, for it concerns a positive gift of Aristotle's genius that has nevertheless been grossly misused by modern scholars. It is mainly to Aristotle's genius that we owe the partitioning of philosophical and scientific studies into separate disciplines. He not only founded the science of logic, as well as numerous separate studies in the field of nature such as physics, biology, anatomy, etc., but also initiated ethics, politics,

poetics, and rhetoric as distinct disciplines in the theoretical field. This, of course, is good as far as it goes, but modern academics have made a travesty of it. Philosophical disciplines have become formal specializations without any philosophical content; the more learned, the more sophisticated they become, the more banally vacuous they turn out to be. Be that as it may; it is not what I intend to deal with here.

Aristotle speaks of “a science which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature” (*Metaphysics*, IV.1, 1003a, tr. W. D. Ross). He then says. “There are many senses in which a thing may be said to ‘be’, but all that ‘is’ is related to one central point, one definite kind of thing, and is not said to ‘be’ by a mere ambiguity” (IV.2, 1003a). Here we are clearly speaking of the being of particular things. Hence we find that “some things are said to be because they are substances, others because they are affections of substance, others because they are a process towards substance, or destructions or privations or qualities of substance, or productive or generative of substance, or of things which are relative to substance, or negations of one of these things or of substance itself” (IV.2, 1003b). Clearly in all of these instances we have substance as qualified somehow. But if we leave out all qualification, all particularity, and speak of being merely as being, can we still speak of that being as substance? Substance would then be simply another word for being and there would be no sense in our speaking of it as having any attributes which belong to it “in virtue of its own nature”. Aristotle begins by emptying being of all meaning. What he then puts into it is adventitiously smuggled in. Not even the primary “laws of thought” can help us put anything positive into our barren notion of being as mere being. Again, Aristotle’s notion of “all the species of being *qua* being” is strictly nonsensical; we can have numerous “species of being” but these must be specific, but we are hardly justified in speaking even of one kind of being *qua* being; this is nothing but an empty abstraction. A

being that is simply being and that yet has attributes is a self-contradiction. Spinoza's substance has attributes because Spinoza's substance is not a barren abstraction but is the fullness of reality, like Plato's Form of the Good in which all the Forms could find shelter.

Aristotle goes on to speak of "being and unity" as the same and as one thing. He does not see that 'unity' also is a fiction, a creation of the mind, that can be put to good use but that, in itself, has no substance. Aristotle must have failed completely to understand Plato's *Parmenides*, else he would have known that the games of logic he goes on to play with those notions are a good intellectual exercise, but tell us nothing of reality, that being expressly the conclusion of the *Parmenides*: Following strictly logical reasoning we find that "whether there is or is not a One, both that One and the Others alike are and are not, and appear and do not appear to be, all manner of things in all manner of ways, with respect to themselves and to one another" (*Parmenides*, 166c, tr. Cornford).

When Aristotle says of the categories and other notions of a high level of abstraction that they are true of being *qua* being, this is a permissible way of speaking if properly guarded, but it is still misleading. Such notions are true of things we encounter and of things we can speak of, but not of being as such if by that we mean primal being or reality. Kant was clear about this: we can only employ the categories of the understanding in dealing with the phenomenal world; outside the phenomenal sphere those categories have no legitimate or meaningful use.

If Aristotle's abstractions are barren and his highest abstraction completely otiose, when he deals with nature he is most perceptive. He holds that "Nature belongs to the class of causes which act for the sake of something", finding purposiveness of the essence of nature. This agrees with the insight expressed by Plato in the *Sophist* when he equated reality with *dunamis* (247e, see *Plato: An Interpretation*, Ch. 10, "The

Sophist’, IV). Aristotle’s arguments only obscure the issue. Trying to serve the ends of science and philosophy simultaneously harms both science and philosophy. The purpose of science is to increase our store of things known; the purpose of philosophy is to provide ideas that infuse meaning into things. These meaningful ideas cannot be proved or verified, and although they give us the only reality we know, we have no right to assert that they represent reality in any other sense, or any reality other than the reality we know in ourselves, our own reality. — We can perhaps interpret Aristotle’s dictum “Necessity is in the matter, while ‘that for the sake of which’ is in the definition” by saying that the Why cannot tell us how a thing comes about, and the causal series or the process of causation cannot give us the meaning of the thing. To my mind this is in full agreement with Kant’s transcendental philosophy.

Aristotle is unfortunate. It is difficult for us to give him the credit he truly deserves. Aristotle’s mind was not made for philosophy but for science. There is hardly a branch of physical, biological, or sociological science that is not indebted to his pioneering work. But, unlike the gifts of philosophy which ever come to life anew, the fruits of science do not keep. And the travesty of Aristotelianism that ruled in the Middle Ages made it the butt of Renaissance thinkers. Leaving aside historians of science, it would be difficult to find among practicing scientists one who is aware of and acknowledges her or his indebtedness to Aristotle. It does not give me any pleasure to add to the injustice heaped on this great man, but since my interest is not in science but in philosophy, and since I have already given in my earlier works my views on the failures and the errors of Aristotle in the field of philosophy, perhaps it is best that, with these words, I leave the man in peace.

CHAPTER SIX

SPINOZA

(All quotations below from the Ethics are taken from the translation of Andrew Boyle, Everyman edition, Revised, 1959.)

Spinoza adopted Descartes' concept of substance – which ultimately goes back to Aristotle – and brought out its logical consequences. If substance is that which has no need for anything outside it, there can be only one substance in the universe; there is only the One, and Descartes' 'thought' and 'extension' or 'mind' and 'matter' will be not two substances but two aspects ('attributes') of the One. Substance can be none other than the One of Parmenides and we will be equally right if we call the one substance God or if we call it Nature; we can refer to it as God-or-Nature, *Deus sive Natura*. Thus Spinoza, starting from Substance as "that which is in itself and is conceived through itself" (*Ethics*, First Part, Definitions, III), proceeds to show how we can understand the phenomena and happenings of nature and

the phenomena and happenings of human experience in and through the perfect being of the one Substance.

Spinoza is the perfect metaphysician. He contemplates the questions: What is real? What is ultimate reality? How do we know reality? What is the good? And he does not see these as separate questions but as facets of one question. He had in fact given a first sketch of the *Ethics* the title “A Short Treatise on God, Man, and His Wellbeing”.

Spinoza lays the foundations for his system in the eight definitions and seven axioms which he places at the beginning of the *Ethics*. Actually, the importance attaches not to the definitions but to the concepts defined. He begins with the concept ‘cause of itself’ (*causa sui*). That is where it necessarily has to begin and where every genuine metaphysics does begin, even if, for the purposes and in the course of exposition it does not come at the beginning. Parmenides began with *esti* (It is). Plato’s Form of the Good was already latent in Socrates’ quest for the goodness that is one with understanding and which Eros ascends to in the *Symposium*. It is identical with Substance as “that which is in itself and is conceived through itself”. Ultimate reality is the ultimate mystery that is its own evidence and that is not open to any explanation or any justification from outside itself; it is that reality that the soul grasps by that in the soul that is akin to the reality, as Plato says in a prophetic passage of the *Republic* (490a-b). That delineates the outlook that Spinoza proceeds to explicate in the five Parts of the book. The remaining definitions (including the definition of God) and axioms simply explain the semantics of his special universe of discourse. (In addition to the basic definitions and axioms at the beginning of the *Ethics*, Spinoza includes in the remaining Parts of the book further definitions, axioms, and postulates, providing positive concepts to help build the total structure.)

The *causa sui* notion has of course to be taken with more than a grain of salt. Strictly speaking, it is contradictory. A cause must be prior to its result, so the self-caused must be prior to itself, which is absurd. But the term, urbanely taken, satisfies the need to stop at the ultimacy of the mystery of Being.

In one sense one may say that Spinoza's presentation of his system in deductive form was mere show. He did not arrive at his fundamental convictions through deductive reasoning; no philosopher ever did. But Spinoza was not a charlatan. I think that, with the sole exception of Socrates, no other philosopher can vie with Spinoza for integrity. Spinoza had a genuine reason for presenting his system as *ordine geometrico demonstrata* (proved in geometrical order). He felt, and rightly, that philosophical statements must have the self-evidence characteristic of geometrical demonstrations, the characteristic that enabled Socrates to lead the unlettered slave boy to understand how to double the area of a square (Plato's *Meno*, 82a-85b). Thus Spinoza, from the basic group of concepts presented in his preliminary definitions and axioms, weaves a harmonious and coherent tapestry of ideas and sentiments incorporating an impressive vision of Reality.

Spinoza holds that the one Substance, which is the whole of Reality, is indivisible (Part I, Prop. XIII). If so, then the multiple things in the world are not separate from one another as they seem to us. The seeming separateness of things reflects the imperfection of our understanding. The more we have of understanding the more we grasp the unity of all things. Through such comprehensive, integrative understanding of all things as a unity we participate in the wholeness and the eternity of the All.

"God and all his attributes are immutable" (Part I, Prop. XX, Corollary II). This is the greatest weakness in Spinoza's system. I find this hard to reconcile with T. S. Gregory's reading of Spinoza. In his Introduction to the Everyman edition of the *Ethics*

Gregory writes, “The key to [Spinoza’s] language is the formula, *esse = agere*, to be is to act. God is Pure Act.” Taken strictly, Spinoza’s statement makes God a static presence. If any process is allowed in the being of God it will necessarily be absolutely pre-determined. Thus Proposition XXIX of Part I asserts: “In the nature of things nothing contingent (*contingens*) is granted, but all things are determined by the necessity of divine nature for existing and working in a certain way.” Elsewhere Spinoza says that “God alone is a free cause” (Part I, Prop. XVII, Corollary II. Prop. XXI further affirms this). Naturally, only the All can be completely self-determined and hence only God can be absolutely free. But if we free ourselves of the yoke of the rigid rationalistic determinism that Spinoza accepted without question, we can allow other agencies a measure of spontaneity. Spinoza’s representation of human freedom as autonomy is a noble conception that preserves human dignity, but as constrained by his determinism it fails to do justice to spontaneity in human action. While Leibniz resorts to logical subterfuges to reconcile his determinism with the Church teaching about freedom of the human will, honest Spinoza accepts the logical consequences of his determinism and is content to equate human freedom with absence of extraneous constraint. Only the principle of creativity (see Chapter Sixteen below) can give us the freedom of originaive spontaneity. This is something other than the liberty of choice which is always conditioned by objective antecedents: unfortunately, discussions of free will are commonly confined to this faint shadow of freedom.

In a Note appended to the Proof of Proposition XXIX of Part I Spinoza explains “what we must understand by active and passive nature (*natura naturans* and *natura naturata*)”. But the explanation does not take us far; we remain within the one only Substance and its absolutely determined modes, for we are told that “from the past propositions we shall be agreed that by nature

active we must understand that which is in itself and through itself is conceived, or such attributes of substance as express eternal and infinite essence, that is ... God, in so far as he is considered as a free cause. But by nature passive I understand all that follows from the necessity of the nature of God, or of any of his attributes, that is, all the modes of the attributes of God, in so far as they are considered as things which are in God, and which cannot exist or be conceived without God.” Thus while in *natura naturans* we regard God “as a free cause” this does not permit any deviation from the strict necessity seen in his aspect as *natura naturata*. Spinoza is constrained by his determinist rationalism and cannot allow freedom, whether for God or for humans, to mean anything beyond ‘negative’ autonomy, autonomy defined purely as absence of extraneous constraint. Autonomy is indeed freedom in a true sense, as Kant was to affirm; but creative autonomy, in God and in humans, has spontaneity and originates new modes of being. The creative autonomy I speak of goes beyond Spinoza’s distinction between action and passion, a distinction which is of prime significance in moral philosophy but not of great metaphysical import.

It is because of Spinoza’s failure to conceive of autonomy as creative that he finds it necessary to refer intellect, will, desire, love, etc., “not to active, but passive nature” (Part I, Prop. XXXI). And further: “Will can only be called a necessary cause, not a free one” (Prop. XXXII). And in Corollary I: “God does not act from freedom of will.” Spinoza is harshly penalized by his own virtue: he is perfectly consistent and perfectly honest and keeps himself strictly confined within the strait bounds of his basic presuppositions.

In the opening Definitions at the beginning of the *Ethics* Spinoza defines Attribute thus: “An ATTRIBUTE (*attributum*) I understand to be that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of a substance.” So what is the essence of a

substance? Definition II at the beginning of Part II reads, "I say that appertains to the essence of a thing which, when granted, necessarily involves the granting of the thing, and which, when removed, necessarily involves the removal of the thing; or that without which the thing, or on the other hand, which without the thing can neither exist nor be conceived." Can that stand, as a definition of essence, to a Socratic examination? Does it tell us more than that the essence of a thing is the thing itself, the real thing itself? Socrates spent his life trying to make us understand that an idea cannot be defined, that its reality has to be grasped in its intrinsic self-evidence. I am not faulting Spinoza; I am trying to point out the inanity of seeking to construct a metaphysical system inferentially; I want to emphasize that Spinoza, like every original philosopher, is giving us original conceptions that can have their meaning and can be understood only in the wholeness of his total original vision.

Spinoza's determinism is inbuilt in his system. Prop. XLVIII of Part II reads: "There is in no mind absolute or free will, but the mind is determined for willing this or that by a cause which is determined in its turn by another cause, and this one again by another, and so on to infinity." Not even Laplace could have put it more tartly. With that Spinoza conjoins a mind that is content to accept what Necessity has decreed for it with Stoic equanimity. But with that there can be no room for any novelty in the world. Spinoza gave Lucretius's natural mechanism an indwelling God, but a God without will, without initiative, without hope. And on Spinoza's premises it could not be otherwise.

The rigidity of Spinoza's method often does him injustice, as when he says, "He will be rejoiced who imagines that which he hates to be affected with pain; if, on the other hand, he imagines it to be affected with pleasure, he will be saddened" (Part III, Prop. XXIII). This follows from his adopted presuppositions, but

if we were to take it as expressing a personal sentiment of his, we would certainly be doing him wrong. A human being is greater than the logic of his convictions. Spinoza, like Kant, was liable to forget that logic is a good servant but a vicious master.

In the Preface to Part IV of the *Ethics* Spinoza asserts (as he had stated in the Appendix to Part I) that “nature does not act with an end in view: for that eternal and infinite being we call God or nature acts by the same necessity as that by which it exists ... as God exists with no end in view, he cannot act with any end in view ...”. In a certain sense, to say that God or Nature acts with an external end in view on the analogy of a human artificer is to endorse the transcendent theistic notion of creation out of nothing which I find inane. But Spinoza’s static necessity is a denial of all inner purposiveness, all entelechy. Consistently with this view, Spinoza equates love with desire: this is a love that does not transcend itself, that does not aspire. A poet starting to compose her or his poem does not have a ready-made scheme, does not have an extrinsic end, but has a purpose, and the purpose is creatively realized in an original poem. If the will were not purposive, Spinoza’s work and the work of all philosophers would be in vain, because no person could bring the ideals of the philosophers to inform her or his action. But then Spinoza, unlike Kant, was consistent, he openly denied all freedom to God and to humans; poor Kant struggled futilely to reconcile causal determinism with free will: without creativity there can be no freedom.

“We know nothing to be certainly good ... save what is truly conducive to understanding ...” (Part IV, Pr. XXVII). This is the ethical philosophy of Spinoza in a nutshell, and it is fully in agreement with the Socratic-Platonic position: The proper excellence of a human being is reason and the exercise of reason is the proper perfection of a human being. And when Spinoza goes on to say: “The greatest good of the mind is the knowledge

of God, and the greatest virtue of the mind is to know God” (Prop. XXVIII), he is again fully in agreement with Socrates and Plato and we may add Aristotle as well.

When Spinoza says that “it is apparent that the law not to slaughter animals has its foundation more in vain superstition and womanish pity than true reason” (Part IV, Prop. XXXVII, Note I) we may be justified in wondering whether Spinoza was too much constrained by his stringent rationalism or whether he was by nature unfeeling. When earlier, having stated that one who follows virtue desires that others share the good he desires for himself, he goes on to empty that statement of moral content by giving it an egotistic explanation, we could possibly condone that as due to his desire to preserve the uniformity of his argument. But what need had he to go out of his way to deny the brutes any claim on our sympathy or pity? Spinoza has been called the God-intoxicated man and of course he does extol the love of God, but I confess that I cannot understand a love of God that does not translate into sympathy with all living things. I find Shelley’s “I wish no living thing to suffer pain” more attuned to the divinity at the heart of the All. Spinoza has given us a majestic metaphysical system, but although he called his major work *Ethics*, I find very little moral inspiration in it.

Spinoza says, “If men were born free they would form no conception of good and evil as long as they were free” (Part IV, Prop. LXVIII). This may be thought to support the attempt by advocates of religion to justify the existence of evil as being necessary for the knowledge of the good. This is nonsensical. If human beings lived fully in accordance with reason, which is what Spinoza means by being born free, they would live the good, practice the good, experience the good: what they would lack would only be the name to distinguish the good from evil, because there would be no evil requiring the distinction. But we are here speaking only of moral good and moral evil, but human

life can never be entirely free of what hinders life, what constricts life, and these will be relative 'evils' requiring the virtues of forethought, courage, endurance, sacrifice, and all the virtues that good persons exercise in countering 'evil'.

I have often in my writings used Spinoza's phrase *sub specie aeternitatis* to characterize philosophical understanding, but Spinoza's own meaning may be closer to Whitehead's 'eternal objects' than to what I meant to convey by the phrase. For me eternity is the plane of being, the order of reality, realized in creativity. Whitehead's 'eternal objects' are supra-temporal but are not in themselves active. For me eternity is inseparable of the evanescence of life.

Spinoza created for himself a universe of abstract notions and special rules to govern the interplay of those abstract notions. This is what all philosophers, especially system-builders, do. But Spinoza was more completely immersed in his special universe than other philosophers. It was practically everything in his life. The deductions he drew from his concepts in conformity with his definitions, axioms, and postulates, were satisfactory to him, and a sympathetic reader may for a while find some inspiration in them. But, apart from the ineluctable insufficiency and inherent contradictoriness of all theoretical formulations, Spinoza's universe is too meager to do justice to the richness of life.

Personally I find Spinoza's attempt to give the mind, or part of the mind, continuity after death unintelligible, for a mind separate of the body seems to me to be completely opposed to the unity of mind and body that is basic to Spinoza's system.

A philosopher does not arrive inferentially at a final outlook. A philosopher begins with an irking urge, a consuming yearning for a comprehensive vision imbuing the totality of her or his experience with meaning and she or he does not rest until she or he creatively moulds such a vision out of the givennesses of her or his life experience. Then and only then the philosopher goes

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on to give a rationally structured exposition of her or his vision. This is at least true of original philosophers and to the extent of their originality, and it is eminently true of Spinoza who had his original comprehensive vision of Reality before he wrote a single word of the *Ethics*, a vision encoded in his definitions, axioms, and postulates and unfolded in his putative deductions and proofs.

CHAPTER SEVEN

KANT

I: BEFORE KANT

Alfred North Whitehead calls the seventeenth century the century of genius. He denies it the more usual designation of the age of reason. It was in the Scholastic age that thinkers relied completely on reason. In the seventeenth century people discovered that, in seeking knowledge, it availed them to use their senses. For the Greeks, astronomy was a mathematical discipline. Galileo Galilei although originally a mathematician yet watched objects dropped from a tower, watched a swinging chandelier, and made his own telescope to watch the planets and stars. Francis Bacon proclaimed the credo of all objective science, that experience is the source of genuine knowledge and championed induction as the proper method for science. Thomas Hobbes confirmed the materialistic character of scientific knowledge.

Fate placed Descartes at the right time at the right place and he unwittingly became instrumental in changing the course of philosophy as the falling of a rock might give a stream a new course. But I do not see Descartes as making any contribution of much value to philosophy. His splitting of the human being into two distinct substances did much harm to philosophical thought, with due apologies to thinkers who regard the *Cogito* as an affirmation of subjectivity.

The weakest element in Descartes' *Cogito* is the *ergo*. *Cogito ergo sum* (together with its French, English, and other renderings), as an inference, is false and superfluous. Its theoretical falsehood has been shown by many thinkers. Besides, our inner reality is self-evident. It is the one reality of which we have immediate unshakeable awareness. I have somewhere written that Parmenides should have started not from *esti* (It is) but from *eimi* (I am). Our reality is all the reality we know firmly and indubitably.

The rationalism preached in Descartes' "Method" – properly the method of mathematics – was not attuned to the mood of exploration and experimentation of the age. It was immediately embraced not by science but by philosophy to its harm. When science later on caught the infection it was not in the areas where science was realizing its most dazzling achievements but in dogmatic determinism and in Leibniz' dream of a *characteristica universalis*, a bright idea that could be put to good use, but has in the hands of Analytical Philosophers become the worst blight of modern philosophy. Wittgenstein discovered its vacuity and was led to despair but other academic philosophers have blithely continued to ply it, in the form of symbolic logic, as a lucrative trade.

John Locke may be seen as the founder of the empirical theory of knowledge. In opposition to Descartes' rationalism for which true knowledge is the knowledge of clear and distinct

ideas, Locke held that true knowledge is knowledge of facts. According to his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, the mind of a human being at birth is a *tabula rasa*, a blank tablet. (Locke borrowed the term *tabula rasa* from the Scholastics who in turn had inherited it from the Stoics.) All the ideas with which the mind is later furnished come originally from simple sense impressions. Locke deserves to be called the sage of British Empiricism. He laid down the theory pure and simple, but in his own thinking was always prepared to break through its boundaries. His great *Essay* is, to his credit, full of inconsistencies, as Whitehead has seen. Whitehead lauds Locke as being in British philosophy “the analogue to Plato, in the epoch of his life, in personal endowments, in width of experience, and in dispassionate statement of conflicting intuitions” (*Process and Reality*, p.60). Repeatedly in *Process and Reality* Whitehead cites the latter parts of Locke’s *Essay* as agreeing with the philosophy of organism; he finds such agreement with the philosophy of organism in Locke’s doctrine of time as a ‘perpetual perishing’ and in Locke’s depiction of “simple ideas conveyed in by the senses, as they are found in exterior things”. In the Introduction to his translation of Kant’s *Critique of Judgment* Werner S. Pluhar writes that Locke “argued for the existence of a perfect God on the ground that the self-evident existence of oneself, as a mind capable of perception and knowledge (which cannot arise from mere matter), presupposes such a God. For ‘whatever is first of all things must necessarily contain in it, and actually have, at least, all the perfections that can ever after exist ...’.” This was of course a tenet of Medieval theology, but it is significant that Locke found it consistent with his philosophy. It amounts, of course, to a radical rejection of the reductionism that is the most pernicious feature of Empiricism.

In *A Treatise of Human Nature* David Hume, starting from Locke’s *tabula rasa* draws the logical consequences. First

he introduces an important distinction between impressions and ideas. The original impressions come to us from an unknown source. (Here Hume was not as radically consistent as Berkeley. If originally we know nothing but our impressions we cannot say that these come from things or objects.) Once the live impressions are gone, what remains in the receptacle of the mind are “faint images” to which Hume attached the name “ideas”. In drawing the consequences of his presuppositions the arch-Empiricist is strictly rationalistic. He does not recognize a permanent self that continues over time. We are never aware of anything other than the successive impressions and ideas. But whether Galileo did or did not murmur “*Eppur se muove*” I am sure that Hume’s transcendent self or mind or soul was always mischievously singing the *Cogito* to a Bach melody, without committing the Cartesian fallacy because she did not claim to be a substance: how could she be transcendent if she were chained to Existence? Patience, dear reader, the riddle will be resolved when we come to Creative Eternity.

Two more far-reaching conclusions that Hume drew consistently from his presuppositions were: (1) The notion of causality is without empirical foundation. We can observe one thing following another but cannot know that there is a necessary connection between the two. All that we are justified in affirming is that we observe a constant conjunction between two impressions. It was primarily to answer this challenge that Kant built his towering transcendental system. (2) In the sphere of action, from the observation of facts, of what is the case, we are not justified in deriving the idea of moral obligation, the moral ‘ought’. Kant tried to answer this in his doctrine of the Categorical Imperative, but I think that Kant was not as fully successful here as in dealing with the problem of causality.

“To hate, to love, to think, to feel, to see; all this is nothing but to perceive” says Hume (*Treatise*, I, II, VI). It would be better

to say, all this is accompanied by apperception (to borrow Kant's term), or, all this has a subjective aspect. The fault of Hume, and of Locke except when he allows himself to be inconsistent, is that they leave out the activity of the mind. Hume allows the mind a faculty for joining ideas, "but we are only to regard it as a gentle force, which commonly prevails, and is the cause why, among other things, languages so nearly correspond to each other; Nature, in a manner, pointing out to every one those simple ideas, which are most proper to be united into a complex one" (*Treatise*, I, I, IV). But this 'gentle force' does not amount to an activity on the part of the mind; it has no legitimacy, no authority, and that is the ground for Hume's devastating skepticism. Hume inconsistently prefers to allow Nature to point out "those simple ideas, which are most proper to be united into a complex one" rather than allow the mind any active role.

Hume says that whatever is "perceived by the eyes ... must be a color". I have two reservations here. The eyes do not perceive'; it is the mind (the whole person) that perceives. And whatever is received by the eyes cannot be simply a color but must be a shape which combines form and color, even if the shape is hazy, nebulous, and undefined; and it is only perceived when clothed in an idea produced by the mind.

II: KANT'S CRITICAL SYSTEM

[All quotations below from the Critique of Pure Reason are from the translation by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (1997). Figures preceded by the letter A and/or B refer to page numbers in the first and/or second editions, followed by page number in Guyer and Wood's translation. Quotations from the Critique of Judgment are from the translation by Werner S. Pluhar (1987) and give the Akademie edition page number followed by the page number in Pluhar's translation.]

In an essay “Kant and Plato” included in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix* (2009) I meant to show that Kant in his critical philosophy was re-discovering an insight that we owe in the first place to Socrates-Plato; that in more than one respect Kant’s version does not come up to Plato’s; and that that Socratic-Platonic-Kantian insight has not yet been absorbed by either our philosophers or our scientists. The following pages are an edited, abridged version of that essay.

OUTLINE OF KANT’S CRITICAL SYSTEM

In what follows I will not examine the argument of Kant’s *Critique* or subject his highly intricate analyses and deductions to criticism: all of these are accidental accretions to what is essential in Kant. Kant’s laborious analyses and rigorous deductions do more to obscure his essential insights than to clarify them. Every philosopher arrives at his ‘conclusions’ first and then works out arguments to support them. No philosopher worth his salt has ever reached his most important positions by reasoning from neutral premises.

The legend of Kant’s overnight awakening from his dogmatic slumber thanks to Hume (a legend initiated by Kant himself in the Introduction to his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*) can be misleading. It is important to be clear about what Kant meant in speaking of his ‘dogmatic slumber’. Kant had his early schooling in philosophy at the hands of the Rationalists. He was influenced by Leibniz and Wolff who, in common with Descartes, believed that the world could be known *a priori* through analysis of ideas and logical deduction. It is this reliance on pure ideas for yielding knowledge of the outside world that Kant came, under the shock of Humian skepticism, to reject and to dub ‘dogmatic’. But he did not forgo his conviction in the active role of the mind. In place of Descartes’ innate ideas,

he introduced transcendental forms, transcendental categories, and Ideas of pure reason.

In seeking to rescue the possibility of scientific knowledge that Hume's stark empiricism had undermined, Kant found that we have to acknowledge the active participation of the mind in knowledge, that what he termed synthetic *a priori* judgments rest on forms, concepts, and principles that have no source other than the mind. Thus the first step towards achieving the double goal of, on the one hand, getting rid of dogmatism, and, on the other hand, escaping Humian skepticism, was to reject Locke's *tabula rasa* which Hume had accepted without question. Hence Kant sets on erecting the magnificent edifice of his critical system by proposing that human cognition has two sources, the sensibility and the understanding: through the sensibility we are presented with objects, but it is through the understanding that we think these objects (Introduction, A15, B29, p.135 and pp.151-2). He finds that time and space, which Newton regarded as objective entities containing things, are forms contributed by the mind, and asserts that even sensible perception is only possible through synthesis under the categories of the understanding, so that "the categories are conditions of the possibility of experience, and are thus also valid *a priori* of all objects of experience" (B161, p.262). The human mind is active and contributes to knowledge at all levels, from simple perception to the highest levels of theoretical thinking. In the Preface to the second edition of the *Critique* Kant says that whoever first demonstrated a geometrical proposition found that "in order to know something securely *a priori* he had to ascribe to the thing nothing except what followed necessarily from what he himself had put into it in accordance with its concept" (Bxii, p.108). The revolution brought about in the study of nature was due to "the inspiration that what reason ... has to learn from nature, it has to seek in the latter ... in

accordance with what reason itself puts into nature” (Bxiii, p.109).

In the first edition of the *Critique* Kant underlined in bold terms the role of the mind in actively forming our knowledge of the natural world: It is our own mind that confers on appearances the order and regularity through which the chaotic presentations of our experience are turned into what we call nature (A125, p.241). Thus the understanding, strictly speaking, legislates for nature, so that “without understanding there would not be any nature at all ..” (A126, p.242). In so far as human experience is concerned “the understanding is itself the source of the laws of nature” (A127, p.242). Kant found it necessary to re-write this whole section in the second edition. It was so incongruous with both the rationalist and the empiricist frames of mind that they could not grasp it, and to this day Kantian scholars gloss over this important insight of Kant’s.

The Empiricist position maintains that true statements are of two kinds only. They are either (a) empirical statements verifiable by observation and experiment or (b) analytical statements. Apart from these there are no true statements. To save mathematical propositions which were too important, practically, to be dumped, Empiricists considered them to be analytical. Kant re-classified statements into three kinds. He went along with the Empiricists in admitting analytical statements (which are only useful for clarification but do not add to our knowledge) and empirically verifiable statements which Kant termed synthetic *a posteriori* statements. In addition to these he maintained that there are synthetic *a priori* statements. He found the prime example of such statements in mathematical propositions, which the Empiricists had considered as analytical. Kant, agreeing with Plato, said that $5 + 7 = 12$ is not analytical but synthetic. This led him to raise the question how such synthetic *a priori* statements are possible. The answer he propounded was that the mind

contributes forms, concepts, and principles that join distinct elements synthetically. Not only does the mind join 5 and 7 in the original form 12; the mind also joins an antecedent and a consequent event – which Hume saw as succeeding each other without any necessary connection – under the form of causality, which decrees that the cause must be followed by its effect and that the effect must have had a cause.

This was the substance of what Kant announced as his ‘Copernican revolution’. While earlier it had been assumed by thinkers that “all our cognition must conform to objects”, he suggested that we “try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition” (Preface to the second edition, Bxvi, p.110). According to Socrates and Plato all knowledge – including empirical knowledge down to simple sensible perception – rests on ideas born in the mind. All things are only intelligible in virtue of the forms engendered in and by the mind. The concepts of relationship, identity, causation, etc., are not found in the natural world; they are contributed by the mind.

The first foundation of Kant’s epistemology, then, is the distinction between the sensibility and the understanding. The sensibility receives its content from the natural world, but this content only yields knowledge when subjected to the forms of the understanding, which forms do not come from the outside world but are provided by the mind. But the knowledge we thus obtain of the world is knowledge of the world as it appears to us under the garb supplied by our own mind. The concepts of the understanding, for all their vital importance, can only give us knowledge of objects in space and time, which are themselves not objective but are modes of our sensibility or, in Kant’s terminology, forms of intuition. It follows that “everything that the understanding draws out of itself, without borrowing it from experience, it nevertheless has solely for the sake of use in

experience” (A236, B295, pp.354-5). The understanding with its concepts and categories must be kept apart from the pure transcendental Ideas of reason. We err when we try to apply the concepts and categories of the understanding – time, space, causality – to the final ground of things or the ultimate origin of things, which are beyond the range of all possible experience.

We need not at this point busy ourselves with the Kantian distinction between phenomena and noumena. What is of consequence, under these conditions, is that all we can know *a priori* (= independently of experience, = by pure reason) is of the world as it may present itself to us under the forms of the understanding. This is the limit of our knowledge of the natural world: we know the immediate presentations of our experience and we can make judgment of possible presentations of our experience. Thus Kant heads section 22 of the second-edition version of the ‘transcendental deduction of the pure concepts of the understanding’ with the rubric: “The category has no other use for the cognition of things than its application to objects of experience” (B146, p.254) and opens the following section with the words: “The above proposition is of the greatest importance, for it determines the boundaries of the use of the pure concepts of the understanding in regard to objects” (B148, p.255).

In the Transcendental Dialectic Kant sets out to clear away the illusions of dogmatic metaphysics and theology. (Kant, agreeing with Aristotle’s usage, takes dialectic to be a logic of illusion, *Schein*. This is diametrically opposed to Plato’s usage where dialectic in the *Republic* is the highest level of philosophizing. It is best to keep the difference within its proper limits as a different choice of terminology.) Thus in the extensive and laboriously argued Antinomy of Pure Reason Kant shows that, taking the concepts of the understanding (the mathematical notions and the principle of causality), which serve us so well in dealing with the phenomena of nature, and employing them as

abstract concepts without experiential content, we can build up logically valid inferential sequences yielding mutually contradictory propositions. He thus shows that the traditionally conflicting theological and metaphysical positions relating to the fundamental nature and ultimate cause of things that had been hotly debated for millennia could all be plausibly proved and disproved at the same time. What we must conclude from this is that these theological and metaphysical questions can neither be settled by the methods of empirical science, being beyond the scope of experience, nor by the procedures of pure reason.

As opposed to the concepts of the understanding, the concepts of reason, which Kant calls transcendental Ideas, are concepts “to which no congruent object can be given in the senses” (A327, B383, p.402). While the concepts of the understanding bring about the synthetic unity of representations, the transcendental Ideas of pure reason produce “the unconditioned synthetic unity of all conditions in general” (A334, B391, p.405). Kant brings all transcendental Ideas under three classes: (a) the absolute (unconditioned) unity of the thinking subject; (b) the absolute unity of the series of conditions of appearances; (c) the absolute unity of the condition of all objects of thought in general (A334, B391, pp.405-6). In other words: (a) the idea of the self; (b) the idea of the world; (c) the idea of the ultimate ground and origin of all being. We may take these as corresponding in Plato to: (a) *psuchê*; (b) *phusis*; (c) *to on*. These transcendental Ideas, according to Kant, have no application in experience and are thus of no theoretical utility. On the plane of theoretical thought, our only gain in being aware of them would be the negative (yet very important) one of avoiding the error of drawing from them judgments relating to the phenomenal world. However, Kant found employment for them in the postulates of practical reason: of this I will have more to say in what follows.

The end-result of all of Kant's Herculean labors was to re-state in more sophisticated terms what Plato had said more plainly: All that we know of the objective world, of the world of nature, we only know by means of and in the light of ideas engendered in and by the mind and that the mind-generated ideas that transform for us the world of shadows into an intelligible realm relate only to that actual world of shadows. Perhaps this latter point, which is emphasized by Kant, can be seen in Plato only by implication.

Kant expected his *Critique of Pure Reason* to bring about a complete change of thinking. His expectation was not unreasonable, and yet, even now, more than two hundred years after publication of the *Critique*, it is far from fulfilled. Despite the massive scholarly work done on Kant's philosophy, philosophers are in as deep a 'dogmatic slumber' as before Kant completed the structure for which Hume had leveled the ground. The lesson has not been learnt: theologians and scientists on different sides and in opposite directions glibly and in all confidence believe themselves able to determine what is beyond experience by the use of pure reason. Not only do we find theologians arguing about God and immortality but we also find scientists seriously seeking to discover the ultimate origin of the world, an origin which, if in time, can never be the origin but must always have something preceding it as its ground and origin, and if outside time, cannot be subject to empirical criteria and empirical methodology and consequently does not lie within the scope of objective knowledge. They fail to see that all of human knowledge is limited to two spheres: on the one hand we have factual information about phenomenal presentations and on the other hand we have awareness of the living, creative, inner reality of the mind. The one sphere is that of science which teaches us the what and the how but never the why of things, and

the other sphere is that of poetry and art and philosophy in which our spiritual essence affirms its reality in living its own creativity.

Kant hoped to make of metaphysics a 'secure science', and indeed thought he did. That was the error that obscured his great insight, the insight that should have put philosophy on the true path. Science and theology together had conspired to bury the Socratic insight under heaps of brilliant knowledge and mountains of dazzling theoretical speculation. That went on for some twenty-two centuries. Then Kant saw what Socrates had seen. But he constructed around the vital insight a massive edifice of analyses and deductions and architectonics, and scholars busied themselves studying the majestic surrounding structure, admiring it or finding fault with its details, and both admirers and fault-finders were oblivious to the treasure that lay hid within.

CRITICISM OF CERTAIN ASPECTS OF KANT'S CRITICAL SYSTEM

Kant seeks to deduce the *a priori* grounds for the possibility of experience. If we do not start from the self-evidence of intelligent experience as the ground of all understanding and all knowledge, we keep vainly going round and round in our epistemological and psychological theorizing. But if we start from the activity of the mind as a self-evident reality, then no argument and no proof are needed. By arguing for this, by advancing proofs for this, Kant was turning the mind into an objective, observable, analyzable thing, and was thus equally with the Empiricists opening the door for reductionists to throw the reality of the mind behind their backs. The totality of our experience is what we know, what we are immediately aware of. The immediacy of intelligible living experience is the starting point, the springboard, for all thought.

After representing space and time as forms of intuition, Kant goes on, in the *Analytic of Concepts*, to argue that there are *a priori* categories that we apply to the natural world. Kant ‘deduces’ the complete set of these categories, arranging them in four groups, each containing three categories, making a total of twelve fixed categories (A70, B95, p.206). Kant created for himself and for others unnecessary difficulties by limiting the contribution of the mind to fixed forms of intuition and fixed categories. Despite his sophisticated deductions and proofs, there is no necessity and no finality attaching to Kant’s Categories any more than to Aristotle’s, which Kant criticizes. Both thinkers overlooked that their sets of categories were merely a convenient classification of the kinds of concepts, as good as but no better than the grammatical classification of the ‘parts of speech’. That Kant’s categories were metaphysical while Aristotle’s were logical is beside the point. Both great thinkers were seduced by their fondness for the neat and finished.

All of Kant’s transcendental arguments, all of his elaborate analyses and deductions, can be replaced by a descriptive account of a world-view and a special universe of discourse that can exist side by side with other world-views and universes of discourse. Witness how radically distinct cultures embody concepts that are strictly untranslatable into each other. Even languages which are not widely different from each other contain concepts which cannot be translated into each other without some distortion. Every language is a special universe of discourse through which speakers of that language live out their specific life as human beings.

In his ‘refutation of material idealism’, Kant offers to prove the existence of objects in space outside us. The proof runs as follows: I am conscious of my existence as determined in time, which presupposes something persistent in perception; but this cannot be something in me, since my own existence in time can

only be determined through this persistent thing. “Consequently, the determination of my existence in time is possible only by means of the existence of actual things that I perceive outside myself” (B275-6, p.327). As a proof this is dubious; it is much better to present this as a creative idea. What I am aware of, what a new-born baby is aware of, what a pup is aware of, is the experiential continuum. By dividing this continuum into self and other than self, I become a person surrounded by an external world; the baby becomes a person surrounded by an external world; the pup may perhaps never achieves that separation and thus may conceivably remain an undistinguished part of the continuum.

Kant says that inner sense “by means of which the mind intuits itself, or its inner state, gives ... no intuition of the soul itself, as an object” (A22, B37, p.157 and p.174). Kant needlessly entangles himself in difficulties by posing the question “how a subject can internally intuit itself”. He speaks of the consciousness of the self in the representation ‘I’ and asserts that it is no intuition but only an intellectual representation of “the self-activity of a thinking subject” (B278, p.328). Naturally ‘the representation I’ must be other than the subjectivity that is the essence of intuition. By refusing to break through the merely intellectual representation to the reality of the “self-activity of a thinking subject”, he renders himself powerless to extricate himself from the difficulty. He finds that inner sense “presents even ourselves to consciousness only as we appear to ourselves, not as we are in ourselves, since we intuit ourselves only as we are internally affected, which seems to be contradictory, since we would have to relate to ourselves passively” (B152-3, p.257). What a maze of confusion! What a Gordian knot! But the knot can be broken at one blow by simply saying that our inner sense is ourselves. Kant continues the lines I quoted above to say that the difficulty he indicated is the reason why systems of

psychology treat inner sense as the same as the faculty of apperception which, he reminds us, he carefully distinguishes. He does not see that it is precisely by making this distinction, by calling the inner sense apperception and then taking the name for something separate from what it names that he creates the difficulty. On the one hand the inner sense presents ourselves to ourselves “as we appear to ourselves, not as we are in ourselves”, and on the other hand apperception becomes a mere conceptual construct.

Had not Kant thus rendered the transcendental unity of apperception sapless and lifeless, it would have been the most important notion, the most fundamental principle in Kant’s philosophy, being the final condition of the possibility of experience. But this is not something to be deduced or proved. It is Kant’s attempt to deduce or to prove this that lays his system open to criticism and obscures the great insight at the heart of his philosophy. The transcendental unity of apperception is simply the reality of the mind, is the *nous*, the *phronêsis*, which, for Plato, is the primal self-evident reality, the reality from which all knowledge springs, in which all awareness is grounded. Unless we start from the reality of the mind, of the transcendental unity of apperception, we cannot escape Hume’s destruction of rational knowledge, and cannot find any meaning in the world.

Our philosophers of mind and philosophizing neuroscientists, agreeing with Kant that what he calls apperception cannot be an object, and, with him, failing to see that it is just because it is our inner reality that it cannot be objectified, end by turning it into a negligible epiphenomenon, a species of mental gossamer. This inner sense by which the mind ‘intuits itself’, is the only reality known to us immediately, transcending all the transient phenomenal givennesses, and it can never be given as an object, since subjectivity is its essence. This is the reality that Empiricists and reductionists deny us; it is the

reality that baffles all their efforts to represent the mind as something observable and measurable. This is the reality in which Socrates and Plato saw our distinctive character and our whole worth as human beings.

There are those who tell us that it is our neurons that determine our thinking, our behavior, our will. With the advancement of research we will no doubt continue to find more and more concomitant incidences of brain states on the one hand and expressed thought and performed action on the other hand. But we will never understand how brain states produce thought and action. Nevertheless, let us say that I am my brain. Still, the act of thinking is what is real. But thinking is not a concatenation of Humian ideas. Thinking is an integrated, autonomous activity. And it is in that activity that I find my reality, and it is the inwardness of that activity that I call my mind, my self, my *psychê*. Thus, granted that I am my brain; still, my brain is a relatively autonomous organism (since we are part of the universe there is no absolute autonomy for any particular thing), and it is the inwardness of that autonomous organism that is my reality, my mind, my soul. And that inwardness is what I call subjectivity. The intelligent mind is not aware of its reality; its reality is its awareness.

In the “Remark on the Third Antinomy” Kant says that though the thesis affirming that “the faculty of beginning a series in time entirely on its own (*von selbst*)” is proved, yet “no insight into it is achieved” (A450, B478, p.486). This reveals a serious and seriously damaging fault in conventional philosophic thinking: it needlessly limits its purview to discursive thought. Otherwise I don’t see how any intelligent person can say that we have no insight into spontaneous origination when every sentence we utter, let alone every poem or song or tale, is an instance of creativity, is an instance of a directly experienced act of creation. Kant, in whose system the term ‘intuition’ (*Anschauung*) features

prominently, narrows and depletes the notion and removes it from the richest and profoundest areas of our experience.

Similarly, when Kant says that “reason creates the idea of a spontaneity, which could start to act from itself, without needing to be preceded by any other cause that in turn determines it to action according to the law of causal connection” (A533, B561, p.533), I would say rather that reason does not create for itself the idea of spontaneity as it creates for itself the idea of causality. It knows the reality of spontaneity in the immediacy of its creative activity. Causality is a concept created by the mind, a working fiction; spontaneity is a lived reality, an aspect of our inner reality.

“The final aim”, Kant says, “to which in the end the speculation of reason in its transcendental use is directed concerns three objects: the freedom of the will, the immortality of the soul, and the existence of God” (A798, B826, p.673). Pure philosophy is concerned with these three problems. These in turn boil down to the question of what is to be done “if the will is free, if there is a God, and if there is a future world” (A800, B828, pp.674-5). Kant not only narrows the scope of ‘pure philosophy’ unnecessarily, but, more seriously, harms the autonomy and degrades the worth of the moral life. Philosophy is not concerned with ‘what is to be done IF etc.’ but with what is to be done SINCE we are creative intelligent beings that have insight into the ideals of eternity, reality, and goodness, ideals which are real in us and which constitute our reality and our worth. Since we are intelligent, creative beings, since that is our proper character and our true worth, if we understand ourselves as such, there is nothing for us but to live as such. Only that is wholesome for us. That is what Socrates and that is what Plato taught: our true worth, our true well-being, is to live intelligently, is to care for and to preserve that in us which thrives by doing what is consistent with

intelligence and is harmed by doing what is inconsistent with intelligence: that is the sum of Socrates' life, that is the gist of the whole of Plato's philosophy. It takes away from this to be good because there is a God, to do good because there is a future life. Plato probably believed in a future life, but he, following Socrates, most emphatically held that we must be good because only in being good are we true to ourselves, only by being good do we live the life proper to a human being, a being whose proper character is intelligence. That is why we should not (cannot, rather, if we are true to our humanity) live in deception, that is why we should not follow false or illusory values. And that is the sum of morality.

Kant sums up the interest of reason, speculative and practical, in the following three questions: (1) What can I know? (2) What should I do? (3) What may I hope? (A805, B833, p.677). I answer these questions as follows: (1) I can know (a) the appearances of things in the outer world, without penetrating to their essence, or origin, or purpose, and (b) the realities within me, principally my own inner reality. (2) I should value, care for, preserve my proper reality as active, creative, intelligence, and should take care not to harm or damage that reality. (3) Any hope beyond my present life is delusion, and in my present life, I may seek to live pleasantly, quietly, happily, but to think that it is in my power to secure that is folly. I cannot expect happiness, and to make happiness a prime end can lead to injury to my only certain good, the integrity of my inner reality.

Kant believed he had spoken the last word in philosophy. He was wrong, not owing to any defect in his system, but because there is no last word in philosophy. The philosophical Endeavour is even more radically insusceptible to completion than the scientific Endeavour. Not only must philosophy remain an ever-renewed expression of the reality within us, but philosophy is

also necessitated by its own central principle ever to destroy the foundations of its structures.

KANT'S VIOLATION OF THE LIMITS OF PURE REASON

On the strength of the separation between the understanding, which applies concepts to phenomena, and pure reason, which reflects on its own ideas, pure reason is found incompetent to pass judgment on the outer world. Yet Kant makes Practical Reason, which should be concerned solely with moral issues, rule on questions beyond its legitimate jurisdiction. Further, in the *Critique of Judgment*, having given us an area for 'determinative judgment' where we have empirical knowledge and another area for 'reflective judgment' which yields 'regulative principles', Kant inconsistently goes on to make the regulative principles of reflective judgment yield knowledge about God and the immortality of the soul, knowledge which he had shown lies outside the purview both of pure reason and of empirical knowledge.

Thus Kant's inability to shed off the residue of religious belief harms his philosophical position. He avers that moral belief has an inescapably fixed end and that the only condition under which this end is consistent with all ends as a whole is that there be a God and a future world (A828, B856, p.689). He thus negates the autonomy of morality and turns the Categorical Imperative into a conditioned, contingent maxim. Kant condemns himself to live with a split mind when he seeks to combine the above statement with "moral principles ... which I cannot renounce without becoming contemptible in my own eyes", or to combine his determination to believe in the existence of God and a future life with his categorical denial of the possibility of knowing that there is a God and a future life. A God out there in

the world can neither be discovered there by science nor installed there by reason — not even by Practical Reason.

Kant says, “Thus I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith” (Preface to the second edition, Bxxx, p.117). This can be and has been put to bad use by proponents of dogmatic religion. When Socrates renounced ‘knowledge’ he did not make room ‘for faith’ but ‘for intelligence’, for active, creative reason. When the mind transcends the limits of knowledge and works purely through pure concepts, it does not give us knowledge or belief – which is pseudo-knowledge – but gives us visions that have intrinsic intelligibility and inherent reality but which do not have and cannot aspire to have reference to objective actuality. The faith that Kant made room for, if Kant were to be consistent with himself, would not mean belief in a definite set of propositions. It would be the acknowledgment of rational ideals, ideals created by the mind, affirming the reality of creative intelligence.

In the *Critique of Judgment* (Section 88, “Restriction of the Validity of the Moral Proof”), while acknowledging that the concept of a final purpose is “merely a concept of our practical reason” and that we cannot “apply it to cognition of nature”, Kant yet insists that “we have a moral basis for thinking that, since there is a world, there also is a final purpose of creation” (Ak.454-5, p.345). Thus Kant continues to oscillate between acknowledging that pure reason, working solely with its pure ideas, cannot yield objective knowledge, and his desire to affirm the validity of the postulates of Practical Reason; between the strict consequences of his critical epistemology and his religious convictions. There is no way to unite these two drives in a common field of knowledge. In trying to accomplish this impossible feat Kant creates for himself an irresolvable dilemma and lays himself open to the charge of inconsistency. Apart from the empirical knowledge we have of the world by the procedures

of the sciences, we can know nothing of the world outside us (which includes our own physical being). We can have no answer to ultimate questions when applied to the world. That is a limitation that we have to accept humbly. Theologians and scientists are equally deluded when they think they can answer such questions.

Kant allows Practical Reason “the right to assume something which it would in no way be warranted in presupposing in the field of mere speculation without sufficient grounds of proof; for all such presuppositions injure the perfection of speculation, about which, however, the practical interest does not trouble itself at all” (A776, B804, p.662). But this concession, which Kant finds necessary in the interest of morality, not only breaches the integrity of the rational being, but is, besides being unjustified, actually unneeded. We have no need to assume the soul, the Good (Kant’s perfect being, God), the All, as objective entities. These are forms that give us, make us into, a reality we actually enjoy here and now within ourselves. Kant could not entirely free himself of the theological dream of a yonder and hereafter. Even Plato was not entirely free of that yearning. But to be completely rational and completely free we have to acknowledge that the only eternity we have a right to expect is the eternity of the supra-temporal reality we live ephemerally in our momentary life here and now. We don’t have to assume or assert a reality outside us, for we have all the reality we need within us.

BEYOND THE ILLUSIONS OF PURE REASON

Kant’s ‘understanding’ corresponds to Plato’s *dianoia* (in the Divided Line of the *Republic*: Plato did not stick to any fixed terminology), where the mind can legislate for the phenomenal world because whatever regularity it may find in the world is only the order the mind itself confers on the world through ideas

born in the mind. Here the mind finds meaning and order in the world as the world presents itself to the mind, but cannot go beyond the immediate presentations of the world. Yet beyond and above the *dianoia*, Plato had a place for *nous*, *noêsis*, *phronêsis* (these terms are interchangeable in Plato). Here the mind is not concerned with the phenomenal world but only with its own pure ideas, which are what is real in the truest sense. Kant too had a region of pure reason where the mind dealt with nothing but its own ideas, but Kant did not have the creative audacity of Plato that made of that region the realm of the highest Reality.

Kant tells us that “through the critique of our reason we finally know that we cannot in fact know anything at all in its pure and speculative use” (A769, B797, pp.658-9), in other words, through the ideas of pure reason alone and through the operations and processes of pure reason alone one cannot have factual, objective, knowledge. From a Platonic position, I readily admit that pure reason has nothing to do with objective truth. Pure reason produces visions of reality that create meaningful worlds within us, worlds in which we, as rational beings, live and move and have our proper human being. These visions are dreams, no more, but it is in these dreams, and only in these dreams, that we have our spiritual life, our spiritual reality. We are creators of worlds of our own and it is in these ideal worlds of ours that we have our worth and our glory or our misery and our perdition. Thus while, by means of reason pure and simple, unaided by empirical experience, we have no knowledge of objects, no objective knowledge, yet we do have a subjective life that has no need to go to the outside world for confirmation.

The pure transcendental Ideas – the soul, the final origin of all things, freedom – are, according to Kant, natural to human reason, but they “effect a mere, but irresistible, illusion,” whose deception is hard to resist (A642, B670, p.590). The deception Kant wants us to guard against is the deception we fall to in

theological or metaphysical speculation when we fancy that we can deduce from the Ideas of pure reason the actual constitution of ultimate reality. Kant was right in warning us against the illusion of thinking that pure reason can give us factual knowledge about the world, the All, or ultimate reality. But in so doing Kant leaves us in want of something of the utmost importance for us as human beings. Though through 'transcendental Ideas' we can never know the natural world, yet in them we comprehend the world. In the idea of 'the absolute whole of appearances' I do not take possession of the whole of appearances but I have possession of the idea of the Whole – an idea in which we humans transcend our ephemerality, our transience, our pettiness. When Thales said that the whole of *phusis* is water, he may have been speaking scientific nonsense (or making a crude start on the way to a scientific theory of the constituents of nature) but he was creating a vision through which he rose above the whole of space and the whole of time, and raised us with him. When Plato weaves a picture of the world out of intelligible forms, he is quick to tell us that the account he gives is no more than a 'likely tale', *tôn eikotôn muthôn* (*Timaeus* 59c). The pure intelligible forms, which give us no objective knowledge, and which cannot be embodied in any definitive theoretical formulation are nevertheless the realm in which we have our intelligent being, in which we live intelligently and have our proper life as human beings. This is the spiritual realm which Kant's transcendental system fails to account for. It is a mode of life, a plane of being, that has to be, and can only be, realized in constant creation of myth, acknowledged as myth — in art, in poetry, in metaphysical systems that declare themselves to be merely 'likely tales', and in the ideals of honor, friendship, loyalty, patriotism, which the cynic has no difficulty in showing to be one and all illusory. The cynic lives in the world of fact, the 'deluded' idealist lives in eternal reality.

Kant's critical system undermines the Rationalists' 'dogmatic metaphysics' which aspired to attain supersensible knowledge. But without metaphysics, without that 'supersensible knowledge', we are less than human. Human beings have an ingrained need to relate to the All; they have a need to see themselves whole; they have a need to find in their life and their being meaning and coherence. To live in a world that is not all "sound and fury, signifying nothing" we need metaphysics, we need the idea of the All, the idea of the soul, the idea of freedom. These are creative ideas which give unity and meaningfulness to the insubstantial, transient givenness of the experiential stream. It is when we endue these ideas with objectivity, with independence of the intelligence that bred them, that we fall into illusion. I possess my soul, I live intelligently in my ideal world, I am in communion with the God – the absolute Reality – within me; but when I think of my soul as existing apart from my individuality, when I think I can know anything of the world as a whole other than as presented phenomenally in my experience, when I think I can discover a God other than the God within me, then I err. Plato would agree with Kant that objects can be given to us only in sensibility. But the highest order of knowledge for Plato is not knowledge of objects but is the insight of the mind (*nous*, *phronêsis*) into itself, disclosed in pure ideas engendered by the mind itself. It is true that Plato spoke of the immortality of the soul, of the origination of the cosmos, of a celestial sphere of eternal forms, of God and gods in the yonder and hereafter; in all of that Plato was a poet giving creative expression to the realities bred by the mind: it is in such dreams that the creative mind lives its own reality. That 'supersensible knowledge' was alone for Plato true *epistêmê*. The supersensible ideas and the Form of the Good that constitute the highest knowledge, are affirmed and expressed in thoughts and myths that must be constantly

subjected to dialectic demolishing. In Plato the only reality that abides is *phronêsis*, the mind as pure creative activity.

Kant ends the section “On the impossibility of an ontological proof of God’s existence” with a short paragraph which shows clearly how Kant’s outlook falls short of Plato’s. After denouncing the futility of attempting to prove the existence of a highest being from concepts, Kant affirms that “a human being can no more become richer in insight from mere ideas than a merchant could in resources if he wanted to improve his financial state by adding a few zeros to his cash balance” (A602, B630, p.569). Anselm, Descartes, Leibniz, all had an inkling of a ‘truth of the heart’. We have the idea of a perfect being. That idea must be ‘real’. They sought to prove that by logical demonstration. Kant shows that their logic was faulty, that their proofs were fallacious. Thus far he is in the right. But when he goes on to assert that a human being cannot “become richer in insight by mere ideas”, he misses something; indeed, I would say, he negates what is most important in the philosophical endeavor. Plato did not try to prove the ‘existence’ of the Form of the Good. He proclaimed that the Form of the Good is all that we know of what is truly real. Our conception of the Good is what gives us reality, what makes us real. While on a lower plane the ideas engendered in the mind shed intelligibility on the phenomenal world, on a higher plane, philosophy, in its pure use, gives us insight into and understanding of the life of intelligence in us that is the only real thing we know. Philosophy gives us ourselves, gives us our reality.

Metaphysics at its best is mythologizing, a mythologizing that affirms the reality of creative intelligence. It is this that vouchsafes its rationality. Formally, the rationality of such mythologizing consists in its intelligibility, its intrinsic coherence. I understand dialectic not as logical deduction and demonstration, but, with the Plato of the *Republic*, as the

annihilation of all the grounds of our reasoning (*Republic* 533c-d), an annihilation that leaves us with nothing but the pure activity of creative reasoning itself, with pure creative intelligence as the final reality. Philosophers who engage in metaphysical system-building are poets who create for us ideal worlds endowed with meaningfulness.

III: KANT'S MORAL PHILOSOPHY

[In "Free Will as Creativity" (included in The Sphinx and the Phoenix, 2009) I commented on the Critique of Practical Reason. Here I give some marginal notes on Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals. All quotations below are taken from Mary Gregor's translation (1997) and cite the pagination of the standard German edition of Kant's works, giving the volume number and page number preceded by the letters AK (for 'Akademy').]

According to Kant, apart from logic, which deals with the form of thought, philosophy which is concerned with the 'matter' of thought deals either with the laws of nature or with the laws of freedom; these two domains are designated physics and ethics respectively, or the doctrine of nature (*Naturlehre*) and the doctrine of morals (*Sittenlehre*) (Preface to the *Groundwork*, AK 4:387). We need not concern ourselves here with Kant's further intricate distinctions and sub-divisions.

Kant intends to "work out for once a pure moral philosophy, completely cleansed of everything that may be only empirical" (Preface, AK 4:3890). In this, to my mind, Kant mistakes the nature of moral philosophy and the nature of philosophical thinking in general. Although I maintain that there is a unique source of all morality, namely, the integrity of our subjective inner reality, yet there can be no definitive formulation of "a pure moral philosophy" precluding all others.

Kant states that “in the case of what is to be morally good it is not enough that it *conform* with the moral law but it must also be done *for the sake of the law*” (Preface, AK 4:390). Further on he says that “to explicate the concept of a will that is to be esteemed in itself and that is good apart from any further purpose ... we shall set before ourselves the concept of **duty**, which contains that of a good will ...” (AK 4:397). Kant does not mean to deny that acts motivated by pity or sympathy or the sheer joy of doing good are morally good. At AK 4:398 we read that “there are many souls so sympathetically attuned that, without any other motive of vanity or self-interest they find an inner satisfaction in spreading joy around them and can take delight in the satisfaction of others”. But he goes on to say, “But I assert that in such a case an action of this kind ... has ... no moral worth ...”. Here we encounter Kant’s much maligned ‘deontology’, yet he is innocent of much of the nonsense that has been woven around it just as he is innocent of the word itself which was only introduced into philosophical discussion by C. D. Broad in *Five Types of Ethical Theory*, 1930, 1934. Kant does not deny that such acts are good, but his concern here is with pure conceptual form. He means to isolate, theoretically, acts that strictly fit into his particular theoretical definition of a moral act. His own Pietistic upbringing, possibly his temperamental reclusiveness or congenital emotional tepidity, may have hidden for him the narrowness of his definition, but that does not justify all the hard things that have been said of his moral stance. Kant justifies the stringency of his moral criterion by pointing out that “a ground that is not moral will indeed now and then produce actions in conformity with the law, but it will often produce actions contrary to the law” (Preface, AK 4:390). A suckling mother, entrusted with an orphaned infant certainly does wrong if, in caring for her own baby she lets the other go hungry. But then, does not Kant’s own supreme moral law admit of exceptions?

Kant tells us that “to preserve one’s life is a duty” (AK 4:397). On what ground? This shows how, when we come down to particular maxims we necessarily enter into the world of the relative and the uncertain. Kant’s gravest fault was to believe that we can derive from general moral principles particular maxims with certainty and with absolute validity and applicability in all circumstances. This can and does lead to tragic stances and fanatic positions. The interminable and often quite unreasonable controversies raging over such questions as abortion or euthanasia are evidence of this. Thus Kant’s argument concerning suicide (AK 4:429) shows what is wrong with considering any definite formulation of a principle as absolute or definitive. I take the principle that a human being is to be regarded as an end in herself or himself to mean that we are to see what is characteristically human in us as what is of the highest value in us. If for one reason or another I cannot live a truly worthy human life, then I can consistently decide to end my life. Isn’t that the decision nature takes on our behalf when natural death ends the life of those no longer able to live a fully human life? Also, what Kant says about the duty to keep promises, the duty to serve the happiness of others, and so on, would gain rather than lose if stated simply as ideals without any attempt at proof or demonstration. And again these maxims cannot escape the relativity that necessarily comes with all particularity and all finitude: this is the great lesson of the Socratic elenchus.

At AK 4:406 Kant admits that “no certain example can be cited of the disposition to act from pure duty”. Necessarily, since all theoretical representation (taking the expression in the broadest possible sense) abstracts from the total actuality, which is always an integral whole. When Kant goes on to say that “though much may be done *in conformity with* what *duty* commands, still it is always doubtful whether it is really done

from duty and therefore has moral worth” — is it reasonable to suppose that he means to deny that such acts have moral worth? His concern is with pure theory. It is not the business of philosophy to pass judgment on particular acts.

Is Kant’s view of duty irreconcilable with the view of philosophers who have “ascribed everything to more or less refined self-love”? If my refined self-love prescribes that I aspire to the highest and purest ideal, that I be good, then self-love and self-denial unite. Indeed, I maintain that all pure morality – Buddhist, Socratic, Stoic, Christian, Spinozist, Kantian – is of the selfsame essence, the difference between its various representations resides in the hue reflected by different circumstances. By a pure morality I mean a morality of autonomy as opposed to a morality of authority. A morality of autonomy says: It is good to be good: to be good makes you intrinsically worthy. A morality of authority says: It is good to obey God, the law, your parent, your ruler. Kant’s morality is at heart autonomous, but he presents it in a manner that makes it seem to be heteronomous.

“But whence have we the concept of God as the highest good? Solely from the *idea* of moral perfection that reason frames a priori and connects inseparably with the concept of a free will” AK 4:408/9. This is a view I have repeatedly expressed in my writings. (See *Plato: An Interpretation*, p.175.) I was pleasantly surprised to find it so neatly expressed by Kant. Surely this undermines the idea of revelation. I am tempted to recall here words I have already quoted once before in “What Is God?” (*The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009): “The birth of the idea of God in the mind – the judgment ‘Reality is living, divine, a God exists’ – is so subtle, like the faintest breath of the spirit upon the face of the waters, that no look within can tell whether God is here revealing himself to man, or man creating God” (William Ernest Hocking, “The Will as a Maker of Truth”, *The Meaning of God*

in *Human Experience*, 1912, reproduced in *Approaches to the Philosophy of Religion*, 1954, ed. Daniel J. Bronstein and Harold M. Schulweis, p.20).

I would not say with Kant that “because moral laws are to hold for every rational being as such” we have “to derive them from the universal concept of a rational being as such” (AK 4:412). Rather, it is the other way round, it is from our experience of the moral act, from our insight into the reality of moral creativity, that we get the idea of ourselves as rational beings.

Kant formulates his single categorical imperative thus: “act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law”, but says that it can also be expressed as follows: “act as if the maxim of your action were to become by your will a universal law of nature” (AK 4:421). I cannot see, despite all of Kant’s derivations and deductions, what makes that the one and only supreme moral principle. It is one good representation of genuine moral insight; but there are others that are equally good. I leave the criticism of Kant’s detailed arguments to those who think that philosophical positions require proof or are amenable to proof.

In connection with the attempt – or the need – to prove a priori that there is indeed a moral imperative, Kant says, “Here, then, we see philosophy put in fact in a precarious position, which is to be firm even though there is nothing in heaven or on earth from which it depends or on which it is based” (AK 4:426). To my mind, this is, on the contrary, the source of the strength and the certainty of philosophy, that it depends on “nothing in heaven or on earth” but is grounded in the one reality of which we have immediate knowledge, which is that very moral reality whose reality Kant so vainly labors to prove. Kant himself comes round to this in his own way when he suggests that we “suppose there were something the *existence of which in itself* has an absolute worth, something which as *an end in itself* could be a

ground of determinate laws; then in it, and in it alone, would lie the ground of a possible categorical imperative, that is, of a practical law” (AK 4:428). That ‘something’ is what Socrates refers to as that within us which prospers by doing what is right and suffers by doing what is wrong. What proof do we have that there is such a something? The reality of it: and the reality of it comes into being with our proclamation of its reality. Thus Kant’s ‘deduction’ of the ground of the categorical imperative amounts to a prophetic proclamation of the reality of the good will.

The practical imperative that Kant derives from the principle that “rational nature exists as an end in itself” runs as follows: “So act that you use humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, always at the same time as an end, never merely as a means” (AK 4:429). I do not see any sense in speaking of any derivations or of laws here, any more than I see any sense in Descartes’ trying to prove his existence from the fact that he thinks. The Kantian imperative is an ideal, an ideal that gives me my reality: that reality is *my* reality; I can never prove it convincingly to another and I have no need to prove it to myself.

The principle of humanity as an end in itself, according to Kant, is not borrowed from experience and must arise from pure reason (AK 4:430-431). Certainly, yet not as an inference or a deduction, but as an oracular proclamation of creative intelligence expressing its own intrinsic reality. Just as I said of Spinoza that he draws all the demonstrations of his *Ethics* from the creative notions he has put into his definitions and axioms, I say of Kant that he derives all his proofs from what he has put into the creative ideas which are his true starting point, not the other way round.

Kant is right in identifying the principle of true morality as the principle of autonomy, in contrast with principles of heteronomy. The principle of autonomy is clearly and fully

realized in Socratic morality and in the morality of love advanced in parts of the Christian Gospels. Kant says, “Autonomy is ... the ground of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature” (AK 4:436). I say that the essence of humanity, the inner reality of a human being is creative intelligence. For Socrates *psuchê*, *nous*, *phronêsis* are one thing and that one thing is that within us which thrives by doing good things and is harmed by doing bad things. I think all of that comes to the same thing.

The idea of a kingdom of ends is another beautiful creation of Kant’s, but when he speaks in AK 4:433 of a rational being belonging to the kingdom of ends not as member but as sovereign, he is obviously doing that to make room for God, as is evident from the first paragraph in AK 4:434. But does not that turn the morality into one of heteronomy instead of autonomy?

Kant rightly rejects the theological concept “which derives morality from a divine, all-perfect will”. He rightly insists that the concept of such a divine will “made up of the attributes of desire for glory and dominion combined with dreadful representations of power and vengefulness, would have to be the foundation for a system of morals that would be directly opposed to morality” (AK 4:443). Does not this spell the end of all institutionalized religion? Yet it does not go beyond what Plato intimated in the *Euthyphro*.

Christine M. Korsgaard commenting on “A free person is one whose actions are not determined by any external force, not even by his own desires” says, “This is merely a negative conception of freedom” (Introduction to Mary Gregor’s translation of the *Groundwork*, p.xxvi). Though negative in form, the statement gives expression to a positive and affirmative conception of freedom as complete autonomy, fully agreeing with Spinoza’s position.

In Kant’s transcendental system, the principle that every event must have a cause, is only relevant to the phenomenal

world. Strictly speaking, we should not speak of causality in connection with the moral world, which is truly noumenal. In the moral sphere we have, not causality, but creativity. When Kant speaks of the will as the causality of a rational being, thus transporting the concept of causality from the phenomenal to the noumenal sphere, he opens up another source of the needless complications that he creates for himself. It would save us much unnecessary confusion if we say that moral acts (the equivalent of events in the phenomenal world) do not have a cause, but a motive, a purpose, an end. I am not content to say with Kant that “we have grounds for regarding ourselves as free”. I say that we know this immediately and indubitably. The tension between seeing our actions as on the one hand falling under the laws of nature and as on the other hand governed by the moral law is transcended by the principle of creativity.

Because Kant, in spite of his transcendental philosophy, could not free himself from the deterministic presupposition of the natural science of his day, he was powerless to resolve the conflict between the autonomy of the will and the heteronomy of nature. He failed to see that the ‘a priori cognition’ of the ‘laws of nature’ did not entail necessitation but only intelligibility. For this ‘concept of nature’ which must, in his own words, “unavoidably be supposed if experience, that is, coherent cognition of objects of the senses in accordance with universal laws, is to be possible”, is indeed nothing but that, a supposition, a fiction. So when he goes on to say, “Hence freedom is only an *idea* of reason, the objective reality of which is in itself doubtful, whereas nature is a *concept of the understanding* that proves, and must necessarily prove, its reality in examples from experience” (AK 4:455), I would say that, quite on the contrary, while the concept of the understanding has constantly to go to Nature begging validation of its judgment, the idea of freedom is forever secure in the self-evidence of its reality.

Kant vainly tries to extricate himself from the dilemma between the demands of reason ‘for speculative purposes’ and ‘for practical purposes’. He says, “Philosophy must therefore assume that no true contradiction will be found between freedom and natural necessity in the very same human actions, for it cannot give up the concept of nature any more than that of freedom” (AK 4:456). But the contradiction will continue stubbornly to stare us in the face unless and until we say that one of the pair – freedom and natural necessity – is a reality and the other a fiction. You can have your choice, but you cannot eat your cake and have it.

It is because Kant’s transcendental idealism remains an epistemological project with no metaphysical depth that he has to say that “we shall never be able to comprehend how freedom is possible” (AK 4: 456). Further on Kant says, “But reason would overstep all its bounds if it took it upon itself to *explain how* pure reason can be practical, which would be exactly the same task as to explain *how freedom is possible*” (AK 4:458/459). In a full-blooded idealism we do not have to ‘comprehend’ freedom because freedom is just the spontaneity of creative intelligence; or say, ‘we’ do not have to comprehend freedom because *we* are just that freedom comprehending itself. It is the projection of a ‘we’ external to and opposed to our inner reality that has been landing modern philosophy in all kinds of quandaries and contradictions. I do not understand myself; my understanding is myself; I am my understanding.

“For we can explain nothing but what we can reduce to laws the object of which can be given in some possible experience” (AK 4:459). This sums up in a nutshell the whole tug of war between science and philosophy. The ‘explanation’ that is given by laws the object of which can be given in experience is the fruit of science and relates to the outside, objective, world, and yields what Kant terms understanding but I would term knowledge. The

other kind of explanation, the explanation that Socrates sought when he decided to give up looking for ‘causes’ ‘*en tois ergois*’ and to seek them instead ‘*en tois logois*’, that other kind can only be found when the mind looks within itself and sees the idea shining in its own evidence. That is what I call philosophical understanding and philosophical explanation. Kant continues, “Freedom, however, is a mere idea, the objective reality of which can in no way be presented in accordance with laws of nature and so too cannot be presented in any possible experience ...” The reality of freedom cannot be objectified; to objectify it is to falsify it; but freedom, like all reality, is always actualized in particular objective acts. When Kant goes on to say, “It holds only as a necessary presupposition of reason in a being that believes itself to be conscious of a will ...”, we see what expanses of thought he denies himself by confining himself within the boundaries of his critical scheme. Had he allowed himself to move on to the metaphysical dimension he could have spoken of freedom not as a ‘presupposition of reason’ but as the reality that ‘a being that believes itself to be conscious of a will’ finds within itself shining in its own self-evidence.

Kant begins the Concluding Remark by saying, “The speculative use of reason *with respect to nature* leads to the absolute necessity of some supreme cause of the *world* ...” (AK 4:463), but is this not just what the *Critique of Pure Reason* admonished us to be on our guard against? But it seems that Kant here is simply permitting himself to speak loosely, for he then speaks of an ‘essential *limitation*’ through which reason cannot see “the *necessity* of what is and what happens ... unless a *condition* under which it is and happens ... is put at the basis of this”, a condition, by constant inquiry after which, “the satisfaction of reason is only further and further postponed.” I have here left out the parts relating to practical reason, in respect of which Kant concludes as

follows: “And thus we do not indeed comprehend the practical unconditional necessity of the moral imperative, but we nevertheless comprehend its *incomprehensibility*; and this is all that can fairly be required of a philosophy that strives in its principles to the very boundary of human reason.” That would indeed be all we are permitted within the confines of speculative reason in Kant’s critical scheme; but a more daring approach gives us the vision of the moral life as the reality we know immediately and certainly.

In maintaining that in the phenomenal sphere the law of causality reigns supreme Kant was right, but he was wrong when he took that to be more than an edict proclaimed by the human mind to serve its interest in manipulating the givennesses of the phenomenal world. Kant was wrong in being too timid, too shy, to declare that the noumenal world, far from being elusive, unknown, and unknowable, is the reality that we see immediately and most clearly, and if we dub it unknowable, that is only because we arbitrarily limit the application of the term knowledge to what is objectively given. Socrates created for himself needless difficulties by too lax use of the term *epistêmê*; Kant created for himself needless difficulties by conceding to the Empiricists their misappropriation of the terms knowledge and reality.

Kant is fond of ultimate concepts and ultimate principles. Kant shares the common error of philosophers who fail to see that there are no ultimate or final concepts or principles in philosophy or in human thought. A fundamental concept in philosophy seeks to represent an ultimate aspect of reality, a fundamental principle seeks to deal with an ultimate problem of reality, but the determinate concept, the articulate principle, cannot be ultimate or final. This is what Plato teaches us when he says that dialectic has always and constantly to destroy its own grounds.

The *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* is intended by Kant as “nothing more than the search for and establishment of the *supreme principle of morality*” (Preface, AK 4:392). But before we start any search for or attempt any establishment of principle, in the very first sentence, Kant gives expression to the insight that is and has for all time been at the heart of all morality, even if never before expressed in this same form. Here it is: “It is impossible to think of anything at all in the world, or indeed even beyond it, that could be considered good without limitation except a **good will**” (AK 4:393). It is the untainted, unconstrained, free, spontaneous, creative expression of our inner reality that is the source of all good and that is the sole good — that is, if our inner reality is truly divine. This is the essence of the morality of the Buddha, of Socrates, of the Nazarene, of Spinoza. If you are good, the inner light of your reality will evince this insight. No proof is needed and no proof can be given, and Kant belabors himself needlessly and to no avail, and all he does is to display, develop, weave aspects and implications of his basic insight, just as Spinoza unfolds aspects and implications of his creative vision of reality as a single Substance, a rebirth of Parmenides’s One, except that Spinoza’s One is living, good, and intelligent.

In that opening sentence of the *Groundwork* we have the sum of Kant’s moral philosophy, for the good will must be free, and to be free is not to be determined by any external force, and that is what it is to be autonomous, and for a rational being to be autonomous is to act under the direction of reason, to act on principle or, in Kant’s phrasing, on one’s representation of a law; and a rational being that knows that the supreme good is nothing but its free, autonomous will and that the intrinsic goodness of that free, autonomous will is an end in itself, and that as such it is such in every rational being, will see that any principle governing the action of such a will must govern the will of every rational

being. That is what the Categorical Imperative comes to in the end. That is what every morality of autonomy comes to in essence. Moralities of heteronomy may or may not accept the fundamental values of the moralities of autonomy, but to deal with that question here is to stray far away from our present subject.

Kant's moral principles – that the will of a rational being is the highest and unconditional good; that a human being ought always to use herself or himself and other human beings as an end and never merely as a means; that a human being ought always to act on a maxim that she or he could will to be a universal law – all of these principles lose nothing of their value if stated simply, prophetically, without proof or derivation from other principles or any attempt at justification, and they gain nothing from Kant's labored proofs and derivations.

Plato said that poets least understand themselves and can least interpret their own work. (This is the gist of the *Ion*.) I would say rather that it is philosophers who least understand themselves and can least interpret their work. Kant gives us an account of knowledge that does not 'explain' knowledge and does not discover the 'truth' about knowledge but that does make the mystery of knowledge intelligible, and then goes on to construct a dizzying theoretical system to prove it. Likewise, he gives us an account of an inspiring morality, then laboriously seeks to deduce it from theoretical premises and to justify it. Nietzsche may have been cruel but was not mistaken when he spoke of the "tartuffery, as stiff as it is virtuous, of old Kant as he lures us along the dialectical bypaths which lead, more correctly, mislead, to his 'categorical imperative' ..." (*Beyond Good and Evil*, I.5, tr. R. J. Hollingdale). Kant's arguments would fully deserve Nietzsche's taunt of "tartuffery", except that Kant does it in good faith. He naively believes he is indeed making genuine deductions and derivations and giving demonstrations and proofs.

Kant's moral philosophy, with its peculiar emphasis on the notion of duty, is the expression of the moral stance of a noble spirit dried and stiffened by a rigorous Pietistic upbringing.

Kant's categorical imperative demands that we do what we ought to do unconditionally. Socrates says that in doing good deeds we do what furthers the health of our souls. There may seem to be a contradiction between these two positions. But the contradiction is only formal, stemming from Kant's peremptory ruling that a moral act must have the form of unconditional duty, which gives it the appearance of irrationality. But then we also find that the Socratic wholesome soul is good in itself and for no other end, and Plato tells us in the *Timaeus* that God does the good because he is good, and in the *Republic* the Form of the Good, in being beyond *epistêmê* and beyond *ousia*, is in a sense beyond reason. This is the ultimate irrationality of all reality. When we reach the highest we can only stand and stare: at the end of the ascent in the *Symposium* we are presented with an oracular vision, not with a reasoned conclusion. Hence erudite scholars have no difficulty in finding fault with Kant's arguments, but in doing so they lose sight of his invaluable moral insights.

CHAPTER EIGHT

WHITEHEAD

[Page numbers for works of Whitehead cited below refer to the following editions: Science and the Modern World, Pelican 1938; Religion in the Making, Fordham University Press, New York, Third Printing 2001; Process and Reality, corrected edition edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, The Free Press, New York, 1978, Paperback Edition 1985; Adventures of Ideas, Pelican 1942; Modes of Thought, The Free Press, New York, Paperback Edition 1968; Essays in Science and Philosophy, Rider and Company, London, 1948.]

In my opinion Alfred North Whitehead was the most important philosopher of the twentieth century. What I give below is not meant for a critique or an assessment of Whitehead's philosophy. These are simply 'footnotes to Whitehead' I have jotted down while re-reading the main works of the latter period of Whitehead while preparing this book. Throughout the book I have quoted

and commented on Whitehead because he was the philosopher who saw most clearly and criticized most perceptibly the errors of Empiricism and its offshoots. If the following notes are found to be mostly critical, it is because I have dispersed the quotations with which I am most in agreement elsewhere to buttress my views. I make no attempt to remove some of the inconsistencies in the notes below: Whitehead was too profound and too honest a thinker to be wholly consistent; my comments could not but mirror the variance of the source.

Whitehead's philosophy of organism matured slowly. Whitehead began as a mathematician. He collaborated with Bertrand Russell in producing *Principia Mathematica* (1910-13), then for a time turned to physics and then to biology, before reaching his metaphysical stage. *Science and the Modern World*, the first of the final series of books in which he presented his mature philosophy of process and of organism was published when he was 64. Fortunately for us he lived for a further 22 years in which he gave us half-a-dozen most seminal books before he died at the age of 86.

It seems to me that Whitehead in his early career overestimated the philosophical value of mathematics. I think that the enthusiasm expressed in *Science and the Modern World* (based on lectures delivered in 1925) was tempered later on. In that 'early' book he wrote, "We are entering upon an age of reconstruction, in religion, in science, and in political thought. Such ages, if they are to avoid mere ignorant oscillation between extremes, must seek truth in its ultimate depths" (p.49). This is a view to which Whitehead adhered constantly; but when he further says, "There can be no vision of this depth apart from a philosophy which takes full account of those ultimate abstractions, whose inter-connections it is the business of mathematics to explore", he was, it seems, still under the sway of his early infatuation with mathematics. I believe that by the time

he came to write *Process and Reality* (1929) he found that to “seek truth in its ultimate depths” he had to go beyond mathematics and the abstractions of mathematics. In the same chapter from which I quoted the above sentences Whitehead says, “The field is now open for the introduction of some new doctrine of organism which may take the place of the materialism with which, since the seventeenth century, science has saddled philosophy. It must be remembered that the physicists’ energy is obviously an abstraction. The concrete fact, which is the organism, must be a complete expression of the character of a real occurrence” (p.51).

In the chapter on Religion and Science in *Science and the Modern World* (Ch. XII), Whitehead suggests that the conflict between religion and science may be resolved in the same way as conflicts between seemingly conflicting scientific theories, by progressive reconciliation and adjustment. This, in my view, reveals the one grave defect in Whitehead’s system, a fault in his epistemology which makes him expect philosophy to attain knowledge about the world. I have often wondered at the failure of philosophers of the past two centuries to grasp the lesson of Kant’s transcendental philosophy, but if even Whitehead has failed to grasp the true significance of Kant’s ‘Copernican revolution’, then one should perhaps excuse the others. The only way to end the ‘conflict’ between religion and science is to separate the two completely.

I believe that when I say the fundamental concepts of science are useful fictions created by the mind to confer orderliness and meaningfulness on the givennesses of experience, I am merely saying in non-technical language what Whitehead means in speaking of the ‘fallacy of misplaced concreteness’.

Whitehead’s analysis of perception in the last half-dozen pages of Chapter IV of *Science and the Modern World* is a majestic *tour de force*. It is beautiful and rich in insight. I still

maintain that the ‘reality’ we know is the totality of our immediate experience. This we carve and shape in various representations. Some of these representations are more beautiful than others, some are more enlightening than others; but none are simply true or simply false.

Whitehead was deeply religious and has given expression to the finest and noblest conception of religion in the following paragraph which I quote in full from that same chapter on Religion and Science:

“Religion is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things; something which is real, and yet waiting to be realized; something which is a remote possibility, and yet the greatest of present facts; something that gives meaning to all that passes, and yet eludes apprehension; something whose possession is the final good, and yet is beyond all reach; something which is the ultimate ideal, and the hopeless quest” (p.222).

Only a deeply religious person could define religion as “force of belief cleansing the inward parts” (*Religion in the Making*, 1926, p.15). This is also confirmed by: “Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness”, which he asserts repeatedly in *Religion in the Making*. But this has nothing to do with ‘physical facts’ or with truth as truth is understood by science.

“Ages ago”, says Whitehead, “the simple arithmetical doctrines dawned on the human mind, and throughout history the unquestioned dogma that two and three make five reigned whenever it has been relevant” (*Religion in the Making*, 1926, p.13). I see it somewhat differently. (Whitehead was here merely contrasting arithmetical dogma with religious dogma.) I would say that ages ago a creative mind gave names to groups of

countable things, having also created this idea of counting, forming a series by adding one at each successive step. The relations between the groups two, three, and five were thus determined by a creative fiat. I find this in agreement with Socrates' assertion in the *Phaedo* that it is by the Two that two is two, and with the assertion of both Plato and Kant that while $5+7=12$ is necessarily true, the 12 is to be found neither in the 5 nor in the 7 nor in the combination of both. It also agrees with Whitehead's charming tale in *Modes of Thought* (pp.77-8) about the squirrel mother that did not know her little ones were three.

For Hume, sensation arises from unknown causes. This is the basis of Kant's belief that behind every phenomenon there is a noumenon which we can never reach directly because it is always presented to our mind in a phenomenon. Both Hume and Kant break up the total, immediate experience into a recipient, something received, and the source of what is received. Hume neglects the recipient; Kant emphasizes the recipient. That is what Whitehead finds wrong with both Hume and Kant. But what Hume and Kant do is the necessary ground of all theoretical thinking. Whitehead also breaks up the totality of immediate experience into a plethora of forms and aspects, as he necessarily has to do to philosophize and theorize; but, like Hume, he disregards the activity of the mind in all this analysis and division. Thus, in common with the Empiricists he criticizes, he believes he is giving an objective account of 'reality'. I think this is the main error in Whitehead's system. What Whitehead finds wrong with the Empiricists is not that they identify the real with the objective, which I think is their deadly error, but that their criteria of objectivity are too narrow.

Whitehead says that his metaphysical analysis "extends Kant's argument"; that while Kant "saw the necessity for God in the moral order", his (Whitehead's) metaphysical doctrine "finds the foundations of the world in the aesthetic experience ... All

order is therefore aesthetic order, and the moral order is merely certain aspects of aesthetic order. The actual world is the outcome of the aesthetic order, and the aesthetic order is derived from the immanence of God” (*Religion in the Making*, pp.104-5). I still do not think that this extension of the moral argument enables Whitehead – any more than the argument from Practical Reason enabled Kant – to evade the rejection of “the argument from the cosmos”. I think Kant’s limitation of the jurisdiction of pure reason is inescapable. Metaphysics cannot give us knowledge of the world; all it can give us is an imaginative construction of the world that lends our own mind integrity and coherence. Whitehead seems to come close to endorsing the Kantian position when he says that “our notion of causation concerns the relations of states of things within the actual world, and can only be illegitimately extended to a transcendent derivation” (*Process and Reality*, p.93), but in his Preface to *Process and Reality* he states that “in the main the philosophy of organism is a recurrence to pre-Kantian modes of thought” (p.xi). This defines the basic divergence between Whitehead’s approach and mine. Mine is decidedly ‘post-Kantian’, I may even say that mine is the only post-Kantian philosophy, although I derive my position not from Kant but from my special interpretation of the Platonic Socrates.

In his list of “prevalent habits of thought, which are [to be] repudiated in so far as concerns their influence on philosophy” Whitehead includes: “The Kantian doctrine of the objective world as a theoretical construct from purely subjective experience” (Preface, p.xiii). This agrees with Whitehead’s alignment of himself with “the English and American Realists”. If it were not irreverent to do so, I would call this Whitehead’s English blind spot.

Whitehead states that he intends “to elaborate an adequate cosmology in terms of which all particular topics find their

interconnections". He expects or hopes that, at the end, "in so far as the enterprise has been successful", his cosmology "should have developed all those generic notions adequate for the expression of any possible interconnection of things" (Preface, p.xii) — I would add: within a particular universe of discourse. Here I think Whitehead — whom with all the reverence Plato showed towards Parmenides I call Father Whitehead — shared the error of all metaphysicians with the sole exception of Plato. He finds the system he has constructed satisfactory and thinks it final and definitive, in intent if not in actual achievement. He overlooks that it is a particular imaginative representation that leaves room for other equally satisfactory imaginative representations of the unfathomable and ineffable Reality that no one can imprison in a verbal formulation and that no verbal account can exhaust. In fairness to Whitehead we should remember that his thinking always reveals an admirable openness and freedom from dogmatism. The penultimate paragraph of the Preface deserves to be quoted in full:

"There remains the final reflection, how shallow, puny, and imperfect are efforts to sound the depths in the nature of things. In philosophical discussion, the merest hint of dogmatic certainty as to finality of statement is an exhibition of folly" (Preface, p.xiii.)

Now I have started re-reading *Process and Reality* and am pleasantly surprised to find that Chapter I, "Speculative Philosophy", shows that in the area of epistemology — the one area in which I thought there was basic divergence between Whitehead's position and mine — there is in fact much wider agreement between our positions than I had suspected. Of course elsewhere I have repeatedly acknowledged the inspiration and support I have found in Whitehead's philosophy of organism and

of process. In *Modes of Thought* (1938) too I have found many passages that I would endorse without qualification.

Whitehead was well aware how the deceptive lure of mathematics had misled both Plato and Spinoza. He writes, "Philosophy has been misled by the example of mathematics, and even in mathematics the statement of the ultimate logical principles is beset with difficulties, as yet insuperable" (*Process and Reality*, p.8). Yet he cannot resist the dream to do for philosophy (whether seen as metaphysics or seen as cosmology) what he, in collaboration with Bertrand Russell, had done for mathematical logic. He, like Aristotle and like Kant, seems to have wanted to turn philosophy into an exact, a 'finished', science. This is an illusion of which only Plato among all great philosophers was completely free, in spite of his occasional enchantment with the temptress Mathematica.

According to Whitehead's epistemology, in experience we have immediate knowledge of the actual world, not of abstractions. "For the philosophy of organism, the primary data are always actual entities absorbed into feeling ..." (p.49). This is an effective antidote to the reductionism of the Empiricists and the Analytical philosophers. But I do not think this justifies Whitehead's belief that we can have knowledge of the 'real' world. Whitehead writes: "Descartes takes an intermediate position [between that of the philosophy of organism and Hume's skepticism]. He explains perception in Humian terms, but adds an apprehension of particular actual entities in virtue of an '*inspectio*' and a '*judicium*' effected by the mind (*Meditations II and III*). Here he is paving the way for Kant, and for the degradation of the world into 'mere appearance'" (p.49). I do not think that the implied criticism of Kant is right. We have experiential perception of particular things of the world, a world of which we are an integral part and which is in effect a continuation of our own body or of our own being. But any

knowledge we have of the world is a construct and Kant is right in saying that it can only be knowledge of the phenomenal sphere. And I am with Wittgenstein in holding that we can have no knowledge of the World, the All. Whitehead's cosmology is as good as but goes no further than Plato's or Newton's. It is an ideal (conceptual) representation that confers intelligibility on the world in which we are immersed but cannot answer any of our ultimate philosophical questions. My remarks here are consistent with the following statement of Whitehead, with which I entirely agree: "The Endeavour to interpret experience in accordance with the overpowering deliverance of common sense must bring us back to some restatement of Platonic realism, modified so as to avoid the pitfalls which the philosophical investigations of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have disclosed" (p.50). Plato's 'realism' is naïve, untouched by the modern version of skepticism.

What Whitehead is concerned to salvage when he insists that 'secondary qualities' are in the 'real world' is what I mean to affirm in saying that what is actual is the totality of the experiential field.

In the chapter "The Order of Nature" Whitehead, referring to the electromagnetic laws, and having stated that "there is disorder in the sense that the laws are not perfectly obeyed, and that the reproduction is mingled with instances of failure", has this to say in the following paragraph: "But the arbitrary factors in the order of nature are not confined to the electromagnetic laws. There are the four dimensions of the spatio-temporal continuum – apart from the particular number of dimensions – and the fact of measurability" (p.91). Had Whitehead accepted and developed Kant's transcendentalism instead of rejecting it, he would have found no problem here. The laws which "are not perfectly obeyed" are conceptual creations of the mind that can never have

more than approximate validity and can never fully encompass the creativity of reality.

Whitehead says, "Locke always supposes that consciousness is consciousness of the ideas in the conscious mind. But he never separates the 'ideas' from the 'consciousness.' The philosophy of organism makes this separation, and thereby relegates consciousness to a subordinate metaphysical position ..." (p.139). Here I part company with Whitehead. This separation, like all separation from the totality of intelligent, living experience, is, in my view, an arbitrary theoretical fiction, valid only for and within a particular conceptual construct. Whitehead's position finds its vindication in the cosmology he is building but not otherwise.

For Whitehead "the notion that the actual entity 'perishes' in the passage of time" entails that "no actual entity changes" (p.147). Perhaps the expression is somewhat quaint but it is defensible. The idea of change involves a contradiction. What is is what it is for all time. Whatever is, in as much as it is, is a form and a form is, in Whitehead's terminology, an eternal object. (In my terminology a form cannot be called an object.) But we have no need for the notion of change on the metaphysical plane. If all reality is creative and becoming is the creativity of being, what becomes comes to birth of what is – it is a mystery, but it is an intelligible mystery, evidenced in our living experience and without it nothing else is intelligible.

I cannot agree with Whitehead's criticism of Kant. Whitehead finds that we experience the world not a representation of the world. In this I agree with him as against Locke and Hume. Indeed this is the great merit and the true core of the philosophy of organism. But Whitehead also holds that we think the world. In this I do not agree with him. He has shown that science, at any rate seventeenth-century science, deals with an abstraction of the world. He thinks that philosophy can correct

that fault. But I maintain that that fault is indigenous to all theoretical thinking. We experience the world, we live the world, but we do not know the world; we only know our thoughts of the world. I think Plato, Kant, and Bergson support me in this. Kant was not wrong in holding that we do not know the real world. He only went wrong when he thought that Practical Reason instead of simply giving us creative ideas and ideals that confer meaning and value on our world, enables us to know about ultimate things, about God and a life beyond life. Whitehead writes, "But Kant in his appeal to 'practical reason' admits also the 'satisfaction' in a sense analogous to that in the philosophy of organism; and by an analysis of its complex character he arrives at ultimate actualities which, according to his account, cannot be discovered by any analysis of 'mere appearance'" (p.152). So what I see as a fault in Kant, Whitehead sees as a saving grace. The explanation is, as I have said elsewhere, that Whitehead believes it possible to have a philosophical cosmology while I believe that philosophy has nothing to do with the objective world.

Whitehead says, "Bradley, who repudiates Hume, finds the objective world in which we live, and move, and have our being, 'inconsistent if taken as real.' Neither side conciliates philosophical conceptions of a real world with the world of daily experience" (p.156). I am wholly on the side of Bradley and, to my mind, Bradley's position reaffirms the position of Plato. The world "in which we live, and move, and have our being" is *not* the objective world but the intelligible world, be it Plato's or Kant's or Bradley's. It is not the task of philosophy to conciliate our conceptions of this real world "with the world of daily experience" but to lend meaning and value to the world of daily experience by viewing it under the forms of our ideal world, or, in Spinoza's words, *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Whitehead sums up the exposition of his 'reformed subjectivist principle' by affirming that "apart from the

experiences of subjects there is nothing, nothing, nothing, bare nothingness” (p.167). Whitehead insists that his philosophy of organism is realistic and pluralistic, but are these words not equally compatible with the most sanguine subjective idealism? I, insisting to be more Kantian than Kant, am content to say that “apart from the experiences of subjects” nothing is intelligible and what Whitehead decries as vacuous actuality can never be anything but a bare abstraction. That I am not wildly off the mark in sensing an affinity to subjective idealism in Whitehead’s statement is shown by the following paragraph which I must quote in full:

“It is now evident that the final analogy to philosophies of the Hegelian school, noted in the Preface, is not accidental. The universe is at once the multiplicity of *rēs verae* and the solidarity of *rēs verae*. The solidarity is itself the efficacy of the *res vera*, embodying the principle of unbounded permanence acquiring novelty through flux. The multiplicity is composed of microscopic *rēs verae*, each embodying the principle of bounded flux acquiring ‘everlasting’ permanence. On one side, the one becomes many; and on the other side, the many become one. But *what* becomes is always a *res vera*, and the concrescence of a *res vera* is the development of a subjective aim. This development is nothing else than the Hegelian development of an idea. The elaboration of this aspect of the philosophy of organism, with the purpose of obtaining an interpretation of the religious experience of mankind, is undertaken in Part V of these lectures” (p.167).

Except for the difference in terminology, these could have been my words or Bradley’s words, and yet I do not endorse subjective idealism or Hegelian idealism, nor do I endorse Whitehead’s realism or his pluralism. The difference between the

positions of the German Idealists, Bradley, and Whitehead on the one hand and my position on the other hand is a difference of epistemology. They are reporting God's reality; I am dreaming my own God and my own Reality.

The thought "of ourselves as process immersed in processes beyond ourselves" (p.8) is the *Leitmotif* of Whitehead's philosophy of organism. On page 190 Whitehead says, "Each actual entity is a throb of experience including the actual world within its scope." I love this, although I am not sure what is intended by the limitation expressed by the words "within its scope". But I do not characterize this as rational cosmology but as imaginative vision. As a rational cosmology it clashes with other cosmologies; as a vision it lives peacefully with other visions — Plato's, Spinoza's, Leibniz', Schopenhauer's, Bradley's, or mine.

I find Whitehead's use of the term 'metaphysical' quite discordant with my own use. Indeed, Whitehead does not seem to have any conception of metaphysics as distinct from cosmology.

Whitehead dreams of a philosophy that does the work of art, that gives expression to the actual, the particular, the immediately present in experience. Philosophy cannot do that. Philosophy has to point out that value and life reside only in the particular, the actual, and the immediacy of living experience, and most philosophers are blameworthy for failing to do that, but philosophy proper can only deal with the general, the ideal, the transcendental. Plato was an artist, a poet, as well as a philosopher, and other philosophers who are similarly gifted, a Nietzsche or a Santayana, can enrich their philosophical works with elements of poetry and art. Whitehead himself, though he does well in emphasizing that value resides in the whole and the immediate, in the event, in the occasion, and in process, yet in philosophizing he works in bloodless abstractions and generalities. A philosopher feels; she or he can then either give

expression to the feeling in art or poetry, or else can give an abstract account of the feeling in philosophy: she or he can also do both this and that but only separately, not in the same act.

Whitehead's language generally, and in *Process and Reality* particularly, shows a quaint combination of mysticism with the highest level of abstraction. For instance: "The actual entity is the enjoyment of a certain quantum of physical time" (p.283). That outblakes Blake!

Process and Reality is commonly referred to as Whitehead's *magnum opus*. To me it is a not very happy excursion into cosmology. Usually a philosopher is invited to deliver the Gifford Lectures when he is ready to put the last touches to his lifelong work. And no doubt Whitehead himself at the time thought of *Process and Reality* as his crowning contribution. Fortunately for us he was to live for nineteen more years in which he gave us his inspiring *Adventures of Ideas* (1933) and the sagaciously mellow *Modes of Thought* (1938).

Whitehead's dichotomy of Appearance and Reality (*Adventures of Ideas*, Chapter XIV) does not correspond either to Plato's distinction between the mutable realm of perceptible shadows on the one hand and the *alêtheia* of the constant Forms on the other hand or to Bradley's distinction between the multiple transient appearances on the one hand and the integral wholeness of Reality on the other hand. Whitehead's distinction is concerned with the modern problem of perception. And I think it is wrong to see Plato's "myth of the shadows in the Cave" as on the same plane with Hume's "doctrine of pure sensationalist perception" (p.210).

Whitehead is repeatedly hard and unjust in commenting on Kant for no reason other than his failure to fit Kant's transcendental system into his own philosophical scheme. Kant was not trying to answer the questions with which Whitehead

was concerned. It is as futile to seek to find answers to Whitehead's questions in Kant as to seek to find them in Euclid.

Broadening a statement of Whitehead's we may say that the philosophy of organism "is nothing else than the expansion of the insight that power is the basis of our notions of substance." Whitehead continues, "This notion of power is to be found in Locke and in Plato, flittingly expressed and never developed" (*Modes of Thought*, 1938, p.119). An eminent Plato scholar found Whitehead's ascription of this notion to Plato due to a misunderstanding. (See my discussion of F. M. Cornford's criticism in *Plato: An Interpretation*, chapter 10, section IV.) This shows the narrowness that goes with erudition. Whitehead's interpretation was not a misunderstanding but an imaginative appreciation of an insight clearly expressed by Plato, and though not developed in detail, yet in harmony with the outlook presented in Plato's late dialogues.

In *Modes of Thought* Whitehead, having spoken of how the intelligence of mankind "has been halted by dogmatism as to pattern of connection" and how "Epicurus, Plato, Aristotle, were alike convinced of the certainty of various elements in their experience, in the exact forms in which they understood them", goes on to say that Kant later on, in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, "gave a masterly exposition of the reasons why we should be so certain" (*Modes of Thought*, p.58). This justly censures Kant but also fails to do him justice. Kant's *Critique* could free us of that 'fatal virus' of dogmatic certainty by showing that the certainty was all of our own making. But Kant erred in thinking that the particular shape in which he represented the mind's making of that certainty was fixed and final. Kant could have benefited by Whitehead's insight into the fluency of all things, but Whitehead should have shared Kant's awakening from his 'dogmatic slumber' when he discovered that we know nothing but our own

thinking. If it is true that everywhere and always all things are flowing, it is also true that it is all a dream we dream.

Speaking of reactions to what he terms the dogmatic fallacy in philosophy, Whitehead writes, "Another type of reaction is to assume, often tacitly, that if there can be intellectual analysis it must proceed according to some one discarded dogmatic method, and thence to deduce that intellect is intrinsically tied to erroneous fictions. This type is illustrated by the anti-intellectualism of Nietzsche and Bergson ..." (*Adventures of Ideas*, p.215). This does not do justice to either Nietzsche or Bergson. Whitehead should have seen that the anti-intellectualism of Nietzsche and that of Bergson are in harmony with his own criticism of the abstractionism of scientific thinking.

Adventures of Ideas closes with an oracular passage, rich in mystic disclosure. I think it only right to end my discussion of Whitehead's philosophy by quoting the passage in full:

"At the heart of the nature of things, there are always the dream of youth and the harvest of tragedy. The Adventure of the Universe starts with the dream and reaps the tragic Beauty. This is the secret of the union of Zest with Peace — that the suffering attains its end in a Harmony of Harmonies. The immediate experience of this Final Fact, with its union of Youth and Tragedy, is the sense of Peace. In this way the World receives the persuasion towards such perfections as are possible for its diverse individual occasions."

CHAPTER NINE

REALITY

THE TERM REALITY

When my essay “On What Is Real: An Answer to Quine’s ‘On What There Is’” (*The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009) was first published, a kindly critic lectured me on the meaning of the term ‘reality’. Of course we all know what sane, honest people mean by reality and what good Empiricist philosophers mean by reality. And of course our sane, honest people and our good Empiricist philosophers are right. But Brahmin sages tell us that all of that ‘reality’ is deceptive maya and Plato tells us it is all empty shadow. For those who find in such views some deep meaning there is need for a word to designate what they see as ‘really real’. Existentialists have used the term ‘existence’ for that ‘really real’ reality. But my terminology had already been fixed before I knew of the usage of the Existentialists. (In any case, the appropriation by the Existentialists of the term ‘existence’ can

hardly be sanctioned by the Empiricists.) Say my choice of term was foolish, inauspicious, unlucky, but there is no question of right or wrong here; I have the right to use the term of my choice provided I show clearly what I mean by the term. What I mean by reality is what Plato means by *alêtheia*, *ousia*, *to on*, *ho estin*, all of which are for Plato practically interchangeable terms. My usage is close to Bradley's usage in *Appearance and Reality*. Whitehead, with whose philosophy I have much affinity, subtitles his *Process and Reality* "an essay in cosmology"; that introduces some variance between Whitehead's usage and mine.

Every word in every language comes with a whole train of special associations and presuppositions, which makes of all translation a sort of forgery. In preparing the way for the main critical part of the *Hippias Major*, Socrates asks, *ar ou dikaiosunêi dikaioi eisin hoi dikaioi*; When Hippias answers in the affirmative, Socrates asks further, *oukoun esti ti touto, hê dikaiosunê*; Then after bringing in wisdom and goodness, he says, *ousi ge tisi toutois* ou gar dêpou mê ousi ge (287c). In translating these phrases an English translator can hardly avoid bringing in the word existence and the verb exist. Jowett keeps as close as possible to the Greek in rendering the first two: "Is it not by justice that the just are just?" and "Then this, namely justice, is definitely something." But for the third he has, "That is, by really existent things — one can scarcely say, 'by things which have no real existence'?" Not only do we have 'really existent' and 'real existence' in the third phrase, but we also have 'is definitely something' in the second. Let me attempt an un-English rendering for this second phrase: "Then this justice is?" I have left out *ti*. Both 'thing' and 'something' are more definite than *ti*, and 'entity' is problematic. Taking some liberty with the form of the original, we could perhaps say, "Then we can make a statement about justice?" or, "Then we can speak of justice?", implying "Justice has a meaning for us", and I would say that this

meaning is what is, and it is this meaning that is real for me, and this reality is radically distinct from the existence of things that can be seen, touched, or even visualized.

The identification of reality and existence in common speech and in philosophical discussion does grave harm. Penelope Murray, discussing Plato's doctrine of *mimêsis*, speaks of "the Forms which alone have true existence" (*Plato on Poetry*, 1996, Introduction, p.6). To me this sounds as jarring as if we said that the Forms have true corporeality or palpability.

When William James, in his essay "Does Consciousness Exist" (first published in 1904) explains that, in denying that 'consciousness' exists, he means "only to deny that the word stands for an entity, but to insist most emphatically that it does stand for a function", I would say that in my turn I most emphatically endorse this, but would ask, Which has a better claim to be called real, an entity or a function? It all goes back to Plato's battle of the Gods and the Giants. What I find wrong with the Empiricists' approach is not that they deny that the mind 'exists' but that they feel that only what exists objectively is of value or deserves the serious attention of thinking persons. With Plato's Gods I maintain that what is real is not the objective thing that the mind examines but this very activity of examining which cannot itself ever be an object examined. It is the subjectivity that is the locus of all value; it is the activity that is home to all reality.

The division of the world into a subjective sphere and an objective sphere, following from Descartes' reduction of all things to two substances, thinking and extended, has harmed both science and philosophy. This is not the same thing as the Socratic distinction between the intelligible and the perceptible realms. Truth can only be determined in terms of fact. Philosophy proper has nothing to do with either truth or fact. This is the 'paradox' I have to insist on to free philosophy from its corrupting and

crippling confusion with science. In this I am reviving and resuming the work of Socrates.

While there is a deep affinity between my position and Whitehead's philosophy of organism, yet my terminology is completely opposed to Whitehead's as set out in Chapter II of *Process and Reality*. This is regrettable but unavoidable. It supports what I have been insisting on in saying that a philosophy can only and must only be understood in terms of its special universe of discourse. Up to the time when I was making the final revision of the first edition of *Let Us Philosophize* I was undecided as to the use of the terms Reality, Being, Existence, and cognate terms. Probably if at the time I had noted Whitehead's usage I would have conformed to his usage of 'reality' and used Being for my Reality, but still I would not have conformed to the Existentialist usage of Existence. So, however troublesome it may be, in reading a philosopher we have to remember that we are reading a private language and, if we are to understand what we are reading, we should not give words the meanings they have in another philosopher's usage.

The simplest meaning of to be 'real' in common usage is to have some kind of being, to be there somewhere, somehow. To be there is to be a determinate existent. To be a determinate existent is to be bound by what is not, to be enveloped in negation. To be an existent, to exist, is to be bound by the limits of time and space, to be imperfect, to be partial, and in so far as imperfect and partial, unreal. The existent owes its whole being to what it is not.

In the interest of clear thinking, I find it necessary to defy the conventional use of the term 'reality' and to insist on introducing my idiotic terminology in which 'reality' is opposed to 'existence'. In my terminology what is real does not exist and what exists is other than what is real.

We can reasonably say that every philosopher re-defines – necessarily and inevitably has to re-define – all philosophical terms in the context of her or his philosophical work, at any rate if there is any originality in her or his work and she or he is not merely reiterating the statements of earlier philosophers. Strictly speaking, a term will have a distinct meaning in every distinct usage even within the work of the same philosopher, and every reader will imbue the term with shades of meaning and associations imported from her or his distinct cultural background. Intelligent reading, engendering understanding, is necessarily creative.

In the context of discussing philosophical terminology Whitehead writes, “It throws an interesting light on the belief in a well-understood technical phraseology reigning in philosophy that an accomplished philosopher censured in print my use of the word Feeling as being in a sense never before employed in philosophy” (*Adventures of Ideas*, p.222). The ‘accomplished philosopher’ who censured the use of the word ‘in a sense never before employed in philosophy’ did not understand that the term was being used for a concept ‘never before employed in philosophy’.

WHAT IS REAL?

That there is no permanence in the things of the world around us is an insight that must have struck human beings from the earliest times. But it was Heraclitus that ensconced this insight in philosophical thinking. He declared that even the relative permanence that commonsense ascribes to things is deceptive. Plato took this to heart. The mutability of all perceptible things not only makes them worthless but also makes any assured knowledge of them impossible. Socrates had found all true worth confined to the ideals that human beings create for themselves. Plato realized that as there is no Justice in the things outside us

but only in the human soul, so also there is no Equality, no Circularity, no Number, in things but only in the thinking mind. It is these ideas alone that lend meaning and stability and reality to perceptible things and it is these ideas alone that are real. Outside the human mind there are only fleeting shadows.

All ‘knowledge’ that we may gather about things in the world outside us is tainted with their essential imperfection and corruptibility. Plato maintains that only what is real is knowable and only what is wholly real is wholly knowable (*Republic* 477a). But people engrossed in their necessary dealings with the things of the world are blinded to the realities within them and are deluded into thinking that the things outside them are what is real. In the *Sophist* Plato likens the clash between the ‘idealist’ and the ‘materialist’ views of reality – *peri tês ousias* – to the Battle of Gods and Giants. The materialists “drag everything down to earth out of heaven and the unseen, literally grasping rocks and trees in their hands ... They define reality as the same thing as body ...” The ‘idealists’ on the other hand maintain that “true reality consists in intelligible and bodiless Forms” (246a-c, tr. F. M. Cornford).

Plato goes on to examine what we should mean by ‘real’, but in this context he shifts the discussion from the moral plane to the metaphysical plane. While asserting the reality of the intelligible Forms, let us say that the perceptible things also are in a sense real; after all they somehow have being. What character do we find in this extended notion of reality? Plato finds it to be *dunamis*, power. A thing is real in as much as it functions, acts, does something. But on a more fundamental plane we find that what is real is not a thing that acts but is the activity itself. Reality is just that, activity; and further on we will see that that activity is, and can only be, creativity.

In Chapter III of *Science and the Modern World* (p.55) Whitehead quotes a very interesting passage from Francis

Bacon's *Silva Silvarum*. I will give only the first sentence: "It is certain that all bodies whatsoever, though they have no sense, yet they have perception: for when one body is applied to another, there is a kind of election to embrace that which is agreeable, and to exclude or expel that which is ingrate; and whether the body be alterant or altered, evermore a perception precedeth operation; for else all bodies would be alike one to another". In commenting on this remarkable passage Whitehead says: "I believe Bacon's line of thought to have expressed a more fundamental truth than do the materialistic concepts which were then being shaped as adequate for physics" (p.56). Bacon was expressing the selfsame insight that Thales had expressed in saying that all things are full of gods, an insight that our philosophers equally with our scientists, blindfolded by scientific objectivity, are incapable of appreciating.

REALITY

Reality is perfection. Reality as perfection is an ideal we create and demand should be. And our demand for perfection reveals itself to be a demand for intelligibility, and our demand for intelligibility reveals itself to be a search for what is whole. For only what is whole and self-sufficient is intelligible. Thus Parmenides looked for Reality and saw that it must be a self-sufficient whole and also saw that to be and to be thought is the same thing, *tauto gar esti noein te kai einai*.

Socrates saw that we know nothing. But Plato audaciously went in search of Reality. He proclaimed that true knowledge is knowledge of what is perfectly real, and he found the perfectly real in the Form of the Good. And he proclaimed that the Form of the Good is the source of all being and all intelligence while it itself is beyond all being and all intelligence. That was a Reality created by the human mind in its own image. Plato showed us that, while we can never know Reality, we can

Quest of Reality

yet create our own Reality, and in creating our own Reality obtain intelligibility and attain reality in ourselves.

The human quest of Reality gave us the only reality we know, the reality within ourselves. The quest did not lead us to Reality, the quest itself was the reality.

The one reality that I know directly, with unimpaired immediacy, and that yet is and will always remain the profoundest mystery is my mind – not as a thing, a given something that is there, but as an activity, a ceaseless creativity that is constantly weaving the flowing, fleeting phantoms of the world, of what there is, that only dull habit makes seem substantial. In other words, the sole reality I know is my noetic creativity.

Yet my individuality, my personal separateness as a person, is part of the ephemeral, phenomenal ‘what there is’. My individuality, my personality, is as much a fiction as the seeming substances, as the illusory corporeal solidities of the world. The one reality is the universal creativity in which my personal mind is one point of iridescence, among other points of iridescence, other minds, other persons. This is the answer to the riddle of solipsism.

Every philosopher in giving us her or his vision of Reality gives us a domain of reality in which we live the only life proper for a human being. Up to this point this book has been a survey of visions of Reality. After three more chapters critical of certain modern approaches to the philosophical quest, the rest of the book gives my own vision of Reality.

CHAPTER TEN

PHILOSOPHICAL THINKING

I

It may be that the area of our thinking that is most befogged, most confused, most in need of correction and clarification is that which relates to the mind. First we need to distinguish problem-solving thinking from other kinds of reasoning. Problem-solving thinking may have been developed further in humans, but it is definitely not confined to humans. Perhaps there is a sense in which we may say that all living things, all things with life in them, think. (I will forgo for the moment the question whether there can be anything at all without life or thought in it.) We may refuse to apply the term ‘think’ to insects, but their problem-solving abilities certainly put our own thinking to shame. Higher animals visualize targets and know how to get around to them and have been known to use tools. Problem-solving thinking is necessary for our survival as individuals and as a race but is not a

distinctive human trait. I would also say that it is not constitutive of human worth. Who knows but that a moron may have a more worthwhile life than a successful banker?

Next we have to distinguish the how-did-it-happen explanatory thinking. A child asks a thousand 'how' questions and the human race in its infancy no doubt mused to itself questions about the wonders and puzzles of nature and of life. We do not know whether any of our kin in the animal world engage in such musings. The answer to the 'how' question consists in setting the puzzling event or phenomenon in a wider context that forms a consistent whole and thus has internal coherence. For the simpler, quotidian 'how' questions we normally find verifiable answers; but in all cases it is the internal coherence of the solution that gives satisfaction, and except when the question has a practical bearing for us, it is this aesthetic satisfaction that we seek.

Thus humans at first found satisfaction in the imaginative solutions they devised for the natural and cosmic questions they posed to themselves. But some time in the sixth century before the Christian era there occurred a revolutionary transformation in human thinking that amounted to the emergence of a new plane of human intelligence. In Ionian Greece certain daring thinkers were no longer content with the satisfaction found in the imaginative solutions to the natural puzzles. They demanded another kind of satisfaction that is very hard to define, but that we may roughly indicate by saying that it had to be reasonable. The quality peculiar to that kind of reasonable satisfaction I designate as intelligibility.

But the Greeks also founded another kind of satisfaction-giving thinking, that of demonstrative reasoning. The Egyptians knew that by constructing a triangle with sides of three units, four units, and five units, we get a right angle. The Greeks demonstrated that in all such triangles the square on the first side

and the square on the second side are together equal to the square on the third side. This kind of demonstration also has internal coherence. Unfortunately, this kind of demonstrative coherence got mixed up with the coherence of reasonable imaginative explanation. This confusion has wreaked and continues to wreak havoc in scientific and philosophical thinking. One of my main purposes in this work is to clear up this confusion.

Two other radical developments in human thought were introduced by two exceptional Athenian men and I believe that those radical developments have not yet been sufficiently and clearly absorbed by us. I will mention these only briefly at this point. The first is the radical distinction introduced by Socrates: based on the original distinction he made between the intelligible world of ideas formed in and by our mind and the perceptible world of things outside us, he distinguished the investigation of things outside us from the investigation of ideas within us. The second is the introduction by Plato of a radically original conception of Reality. These two developments, the Socratic and the Platonic, are closely connected, and I maintain that they have been subject to misunderstanding and confusion from the earliest times. I believe that it is of vital importance for human culture to properly understand and appropriate the Ionian development and the Socratic and Platonic insights. In this work my purpose is to help towards that end.

Philosophia, early in her life history, had a genuine intuition into her proper character and her true mission. But as she grew up in company with her two elder sisters, Science and Mathematics, it was natural that the three sisters should share common interests and pick up from each other common habits, so that people came to confound them with each other. Yet the talents of the three sisters and their vocations were truly distinct. The fact that people mistook the sisters for each other was bad enough, but far worse was the fact that the sisters were themselves thereby led astray;

and when, consequently, any of the sisters tried to do the work of the other, trouble ensued.

Taking leave now of the parable, we can say that when people expected philosophy to give us knowledge of the world outside us, thus confounding it with science, and when they expected it to give us demonstrable truth, thus confounding it with mathematics, they unwittingly exposed philosophy to ridicule and scorn, for in more than twenty-five centuries of labor philosophy has, admittedly, failed to give us any verifiable information about the world or any inferential propositions that could stand to examination. This leaves us with one of two conclusions: either the whole philosophical venture was a delusion or a hoax, as Empiricists, Positivists, and Analytical philosophers have been dinning into our heads, or else we have been mistaken about the nature and function of philosophical thinking, as I have been saying in all my writings and will be saying in this book.

Every philosophy is a way, a manner, of looking at things. What things? The only reality (in a 'lower' sense of the word) we have to deal with is the totality of our experience, including the presentations and the motions of our own body. I suppose this was Locke's starting point. But, as against Locke, I say that this does not give us any knowledge. We have to put knowledge into it. At the lowest (meaning most fundamental, naïve) level, the knowledge we put into the given totality of experience is inherited, traditional. A baby, even before it picks up its first words, is actually taught by the mother, through gesture and motion, to distinguish certain things within its experiential totality, to cut and hue certain things from the nebulous totality. I have no intention to delve into child psychology, but I believe that what I have just said is a sensible way of representing what happens at this stage. When the child is taught its first words, it is given a world that is radically distinct from the world of the

kitten nestling beside the child. As the child grows, its world grows. Soon the little girl or little boy lives in a world of concepts, beliefs, values, that in no way can be found in or derived from the content of the original experiential totality.

At a higher level the girl or boy lives in a world of beliefs, ideals, dogmas, superstitions, that are distinct from and foreign to the given experiential content. At the highest level poets and philosophers give us worlds that have their own reality and which constitute our cultural or spiritual life. The words ‘cultural’ and ‘spiritual’ here do not imply any value judgment, for there are bad as well as good ‘ideal’ worlds. All of these worlds are artificial formations that can in no way be arrived at by any analysis of or any deduction from the experiential content (which is coextensive with and strictly amounts to the whole of the given world including our own bodies) any more than Michelangelo’s *Pietà* can be arrived at by analysis of or deduction from the raw block of marble. And all of the worlds have the same mode of reality. Truly, “The mind is its own place, and in itself” can not only “make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell of Heav’n”, but can make a real heaven or a real hell of the indifferent material we are all given when we come into the world. Philosophers have fooled themselves and have been fooling us by believing or pretending that they give us a true account of a reality or a world outside of and independent of the reality of our own mind. Of all philosophers, only Socrates was content with his inner reality and only Plato knew that he was all the time playing God, creating for us worlds in which we can have a real life but which in themselves have no reality other than the reality they have in us.

II

Two errors have bedeviled philosophical thinking throughout its history and have dragged philosophy to its present sorry state. Philosophers beguiled themselves into thinking (1) that they are

required to and can arrive at factual knowledge about the world around us, and/or (2) that they should and can arrive at true conclusions through valid reasoning. Hence David Hume could plausibly declare, “If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, *Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number?* No. *Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence?* No. Commit it then to the flames: For it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion” (*Enquiry*, 12). These words have often been quoted with implicit approval; they would have been seen to be beside the mark if those two errors had not been accepted without question.

In the ‘autobiographical’ passage in the *Phaedo* Socrates unequivocally announces that he renounced inquiry into natural causes when he found out that the investigation of actualities – *en ergois* – could not yield answers to the questions that were his special concern. And while a cursory reading of Plato may often give the impression that he expected to arrive at philosophical conclusions by deductive reasoning, we find that neither the ascent to the highest Beauty in the *Symposium*, nor the vision of the celestial world of the Forms in the *Phaedrus*, nor the revelation of the Form of the Good in the *Republic* comes as the result of inferential reasoning. The successive arguments for the immortality of the soul – or as I prefer to see it, for the eternity of the soul – in the *Phaedo* are all openly and clearly confessed to be inadequate. And in the *Republic* we are emphatically told that dialectic must undermine (*anairein*) all the presuppositions of our philosophizing. Doesn’t all this give us cause to pause and think, even in the teeth of the bad example set by Aristotle’s *Metaphysica*?

Socrates, in renouncing the investigation of physical causes, drew a line between scientific thinking and philosophical thinking. Since the philosopher is not concerned with the outside

world, philosophical statements are not factual statements and are not amenable to verification by empirical methods and the question of truth or falsehood is not relevant to them. A philosophical statement creates its own reality. When Socrates says that it is better to suffer wrong than to perpetrate wrong he is creating an ideal that gives us a plane of spiritual life that we may enjoy. When the cynic derides that ideal you cannot say that the cynic is mistaken but you can say that the cynic deprives herself or himself of a worthy life. All the virtues are foolish ideals created by humans. These ideals have given humans saintly lives and heroic lives; have given them the experience of nobility and the experience of chivalry. In the same way a Spinoza or a Bradley gives us an intelligible world to live in; an imaginary vision that vouchsafes its own reality; but when Spinoza or Bradley says that his vision is a true report of the actual world, he can easily be shown that he is in error. Philosophy and poetry are in the same business, but while poetry builds her imaginary worlds with images and feelings philosophy builds hers with concepts. Philosophy gives us neither verifiable fact nor demonstrable truth but gives us an oracular vision.

The philosopher wrestles with the ultimate mystery of Being, the ultimate mystery of Life, the ultimate mystery of Value. The mystery jealously guards its eternal secret and any insight into it is strictly ineffable and eludes all thought formulations. It can only be intimated in myth. When the myth is taken for factual truth it turns into dogma and superstition. That is why philosophy must regularly dig up its foundations and destroy its presuppositions.

The aphorism and the paradox are proper tools for oracular philosophy, since the virtue of oracular philosophy is not verity or inferential certainty but intrinsic coherence and self-evidence. The aphorism with its indefiniteness and ambiguity does not lend itself to being received passively but demands to be pondered;

and the paradox with its inbuilt contradictoriness shocks us into examining our settled presuppositions.

Argumentation in philosophy has only an ancillary role. It is good for clarification in the course of exposition. It is not good for reaching conclusions. I have already referred to the arguments in the *Phaedo*. The arguments for immortality are confessed to be inconclusive. Again, the distinction between the intelligible and the perceptible – fundamental to the Socratic-Platonic philosophy – is not presented as demonstrated but we are simply asked to ‘lay down two kinds’: "You want us then to lay down two kinds of being, the one visible, the other invisible?" *thômen oun boulei ... duo eidê tôn ontôn, to men horaton, to de aides*; (79a.) The fecund idea of the affinity of the soul to the divine is suggested poetically. The all-important Socratic idea that the intelligible form stands secure in its own self-evidence is given prophetically. In the *Republic* there is no argumentation except in Book I which reaches no conclusion but ends in the customary *aporia*. (I have used ‘argumentation’ here to indicate argument in a narrow sense as inferential proceeding as distinct from argument in a wider sense as explication and justification.)

No philosopher worth her or his salt arrives at her or his outlook inferentially. A philosopher wrestles with a problem till she or he creatively produces an ideal form or structure that lends intelligibility to the problematic content of the problem. Every philosophic outlook is creative and every philosophic expression is prophetic. In time the philosopher constructs explicatory arguments for the sake of exposition.

The value of a philosopher’s work does not reside in the conclusions reached. For the philosopher the whole value is in the process of philosophizing, in the exercise of her or his creative intelligence. For the reader the value of the philosophic work is in the challenge and the opportunity it offers the reader

for wrestling for herself or himself with the problem and enjoying the exercise of her or his own creative intelligence.

In the Upanishads there is a profoundly significant tale. I take this from Acharya Vinoba Bhave's *Talks on the Gita*, 1958, 1959, but I have permitted myself some 'editing' of the text:

Once the *devas* (bright gods), and the *danavas* (dark gods), and the humans all went to Prajapati (the Creator) seeking advice. The *devas* went first and Prajapati gave them for advice the one syllable '*da*'. The bright gods said, "We *devas* are self-indulgent; the taste of sensual pleasures has taken hold of us. Brahma, by the sound '*da*' is telling us to acquire *damana* (self-control)." Next went the *danavas* and Prajapati gave them for advice the same one syllable '*da*'. The dark gods said, "We *danavas* are very prone to anger and are hard-hearted. The Creator is telling us by the sound '*da*' to cultivate *daya* (compassion)." Then the humans went for advice and received from the Creator the selfsame one syllable '*da*'. The humans said, "We humans are given to greed and are possessed with the desire for piling up wealth. Prajapati is telling us to practice *dana* (giving gifts)." The Creator approved of their several interpretations. He did not give them any command or any determinate advice. They found the meaning of the divine message not in the sound '*da*' but in their hearts.

Often a given text receives a higher meaning, or at any rate a new meaning, through misunderstanding, misinterpretation, or mistranslation. For instance, "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you", as it has come to be understood, is an improvement through misinterpretation of the original "The Kingdom of Heaven is among you" (i.e., already come on earth).

Plato at one time (in the *Phaedo* and the *Meno*) suggested that in philosophizing we should reason from hypotheses. That

method has its uses but it is not the method proper to philosophical thinking. Plato was always experimenting with ideas. To learn the true nature of philosophical thinking from Plato we should look at what he practiced rather than at what from time to time he advocated. Philosophy proceeds neither by observation and experimentation and induction in the manner of science nor by deduction from given premises in the manner of mathematics nor yet by reasoning from hypotheses as suggested by Plato at one time. Philosophy is properly oracular; it creates ideas and patterns of ideas and visions in which the bare and dumb givennesses of experience obtain meaning.

A philosophical statement does not require proof and is not amenable to proof or validation. Kant in his transcendental philosophy gives us a profoundly perceptive system of ideas that reveals how the concepts of the understanding confer meaning on the dumb deliverances of experience and how the Ideas of pure reason create for us meaningful worlds in which we have our properly human life but then goes on to confound this precious gift by his intricate analyses and deductions and proofs. As a result scholars have been busy showing the defects, faults, and errors of the analyses, deductions, and proofs, and have been completely oblivious of the valuable core that is as true and as false as Goethe's *Faust*. The criticisms leveled at Kant's system would be exactly paralleled by someone demonstrating that there was never a Faust or that if there was ever a Faust he did not have much in common with Goethe's portrayal of him and further that the doings of Mephistopheles are contrary to reason. The pity is that while Goethe would have been amused by such criticism, Kant would have been grieved. Jesus said of his persecutors, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. We should say of philosophers, Lord, bless them, for they know not what gifts they bring us.

The other side of the coin is equally enveloped in misunderstanding. Science and science alone gives us all objective, factual knowledge. But there is something philosophy gives us which it is not in the power of science to give. It is as important to realize this as it is to acknowledge that philosophy does not give us objective knowledge. What to call that thing is indifferent; I call it 'understanding' as I call that which philosophy cannot give 'knowledge'. This usage could be reversed; that is not important; what is important is to realize that there is such a thing. The methods of science can tell us how to handle a thing and how a thing comes about. But the methods of science cannot give us the ultimate 'what' or the ultimate 'why' of a thing. Newton knew that his 'laws' enabled him to predict the course a planet or a comet would take; but what made the planet or the comet move he called 'force' but confessed that for him it remained a complete mystery. Those who think that by speaking of inertia and momentum and the like they have removed the mystery and reached understanding do not know what they are talking about.

Scientists may one day, and that may be soon, produce a living organism out of inert matter, but that will not give us understanding of what life is. Neurologists may map completely all the activities of the brain, but that will not tell us what thought is or what the mind is. I find that it is very difficult to make people trained to scientific thinking appreciate this. They are satisfied when they find out how things function and how to get things done. That is what constitutes knowledge and understanding for them. If they are completely satisfied I do not grudge them their contentment, but when others say that life remains a mystery to them and that mind remains a mystery to them let the scientists not be impatient with those others and angrily scold them saying, We have shown you what life is and what mind is. More seriously, let them not affirm confidently that

they will sooner or later be able to tell us why there is anything at all rather than nothing, why or even how the universe came to be, for even when they have told me how or why the Big Bang banged I will still stubbornly ask, And what brought about the Banging Bang? That is the age-old question of the eternal child: And who made God? Kant told us that that is a question for which there will never be an answer and Wittgenstein told us that that is a question that cannot even be asked. But the philosopher audaciously gives an answer that cannot be true and does not pretend to be true but that yet gives us an intelligible universe of our own in which we find rest as the child finds rest in a fairy tale told him by his Grandma.

Philosophical statements are not factual, are not 'true' of the world outside the mind, but they are not unrelated to the outside world. They are not without content; they shape the world and give meaning to the things of the world. The end and purpose of philosophizing is to infuse meaning into the meaningless givennesses of experience. Again I find Kant re-discovering the Socratic-Platonic insight. For Socrates and Plato the forms engendered in the mind and that have no being, as forms, outside the mind, give things outside the mind all the meaning they have. For Kant the concepts of the understanding put into the world all the knowledge we have of the world. The pure ideas and ideals give us the spiritual life we live on the spiritual plane, give us our reality on the spiritual plane. For content, they shape and mould our feelings, our sentiments, our human relations. All deeds of love, all heroic deeds, all aspirations, are modes of life formed by ideas and ideals that have no being outside the mind but that create a reality that is all the reality that we know immediately and indubitably.

Endless needless controversies continue to rage about Darwinism. The question to ask about Darwinism, or any scientific statement, is not whether it is right or wrong, but to

what extent it does or does not give a clear and reasonably accurate account of the objective state of affairs within its purview. To expect or require Darwinism to prove or disprove or support or undermine teleology in nature only shows that we do not know what questions we may address to science and what questions science can never answer. Teleology is a philosophical concept that sheds intelligibility on the natural scene but that no one can ever prove right or wrong. You can only judge it in error when it claims to be speaking of the actual world outside the human mind: it is then no truer than Empedocles' Love and Hate. Facts are thrust upon us: we feel their impact on us, we can sometimes manipulate them, but we cannot penetrate into their inner being. That defines the boundaries of science. Realities are creations of our mind: they give us all the meanings, all the values, that constitute our inner life, but they tell us nothing about the outer world. This is the realm of poetry and philosophy. It is the confusion of these two domains that keeps us going in endless circles simply because we persist in asking the wrong questions in the wrong place. Socrates told us this; Kant told us this; but we continue to make fools of ourselves.

III

Scholars have seen Plato's *Parmenides* as a riddle, a puzzle, some have even seen it as a jest (A. E. Taylor, *Plato*, p.361). They busy themselves with the details and intricacies of the arguments, glorying in pointing out a fault here, a fallacy there. They fail to see that it is perhaps the one and only dialogue of Plato's in which the 'moral' of the tale is plainly and explicitly stated in the conclusion where 'Parmenides' declares that whether we say that the one is many, or that the one is not many, or that the many are one, or that the many are not one, every one of these statements can be proved to be true and every one of them can be proved to be false (166c). Socrates throughout his

career had been showing that whatever statement we make about any idea can be seen to be somehow, in some sense, in some respect, inadequate or false. Thus all the elenctic discourses end in *aporia* (perplexity) and when Socrates declares that all things beautiful are beautiful by no other thing or by no other cause than by the idea of Beauty, we are meant to understand that the meaning of an idea can be sought nowhere but in the self-evidence of the idea. And Plato in the *Republic* asserts that dialectic must destroy all presuppositions. All of these positions – the gist of the *Parmenides*, the *aporia* of the Socratic elenctic, the injunction of the Platonic dialectic – must be seen as related and as speaking one lesson. And the lesson is not unrelated to Kant's antinomies of pure reason. All theory, all determinate formulation of thought, is fraught with contradiction. Pure reason can give us no 'truth'. In a closed system of ideas, in mathematics, we can have valid conclusions within the terms of the system. But in the realm of philosophical thinking we have creative ideas and creative systems of ideas that are their own meaning and their own reality. Philosophic ideas and philosophic systems are not 'true' of anything outside the mind; they are not factual, hence I designate all philosophical ideas and all philosophical statements mythical.

In philosophizing we live the life of creative intelligence, of intelligent creativity. In philosophizing we create ideal worlds that have all their reality in the act of creation. Our reality, all the reality we know, is the creativity that builds evanescent dream worlds. Watching the rays of the setting sun reflected on the surface of a clear river we enjoy an ever-changing, ever-vanishing panorama that has its living reality within us and nowhere but within us. Such should be our philosophizing, an evanescent world of living intelligence that has its reality in our mind and nowhere but in our mind.

To live philosophically is to wrestle ceaselessly with the great questions of philosophy and to propose answers to those questions but only to realize and to expose their insufficiency. A final answer to a philosophical question kills not only the question but kills also the questioning mind which alone is the living mind. In a 'correct' answer philosophy becomes a religion and the mind becomes a fossil. The substance of religion is dogma, the essence of philosophy is perplexity.

The yearning for understanding was from the beginning the driving force behind the quest for Reality. In its long march from its primitive beginnings humanity has made great advances in the instrumentalities of civilization, has reached abundance in material goods (though the enjoyment of these is confined to a portion of the human family while large numbers of humans live in dire deprivation), and has amassed a tremendous amount of information about the natural world, but along with all these gains humanity has been gradually wasting its store of *understanding*. Today we are drowning in knowledge and desperately gasping for a breath of understanding.

IV

I say that philosophy has nothing to do with the practical problems of life. I also say that philosophy is not philosophy if it is not a philosophy for life. There is no contradiction here; anyone who has read what I have written thus far with understanding will see that these two statements are actually complementary. Philosophy by its nature does not deal with the particular and cannot contribute directly to the solution of any particular problem. Yet philosophy determines the meaning and the quality of life for the individual. We may say that philosophy has two distinct functions or two dimensions. If we have to name these we may say they are: (1) dialectics or philosophy as philosophizing; (2) metaphysics or oracular philosophy:

In the first place, philosophy as philosophizing, in subjecting all givenness to the jurisdiction of reason, frees the mind of all thralldom, and enables the mind to see its own reality and to see that its intelligent creativity is all of its reality and all the reality known to a human being. Philosophy as philosophizing is freedom, is creative life, is intelligent life. That is the sole good and all the good there is for a human being. All the rest is chaff and tinsel.

In the second place, philosophy as prophecy creates visions which infuse meaning and value into life. This is the function of poetry and of art. In this respect philosophy is a species of poetry, only distinguished by its medium. We may say that as we place under Poetry drama, and epic, and lyric, etc., we may also include under it metaphysics. Metaphysics in common with poetry and art gives us ideal worlds in which we enjoy our spiritual life.

In the *Republic* Plato proposes that, to ensure that the citizens assigned to the diverse classes of society acquiesce in their allotted positions, we have to devise a ‘noble lie’ to make the citizens believe that while they are all brothers yet God has made them differently; in some he mixed gold, in others silver, and in yet others a baser metal (414b-415d). The ‘lie’ was to pass for revealed truth; any skepticism about it was to be seen as detrimental to the security of the city. In *Plato: An Interpretation* (Chapter Seven, “The Argument of the *Republic*”, Appendix A) I said that the lie can only be condoned if the whole of the *Republic* ideal city is taken as itself a ‘noble lie’ so that the lie within the lie becomes less harmful. But may we not also say that Plato was here intimating a profound insight? No human society or human community can enjoy cohesion and stability without some foundational lie at its base. Such are all the major religions. Such are all the nationalities. But must we always lie under the yoke of the lie? Can we not unite society – any particular society or the whole of human society – under the banner of a dream,

plainly acknowledged as a dream? To my mind that is the only hope for humanity. Even our institutionalized religions, if freed of the superstition of divine revelation, can serve as so many diverse cultures under any of which we can enjoy a rich spiritual life, provided only that we free it of the 'lie in the soul' that presumes it to be literally true and that arrogantly proclaims it to be the sole possessor of truth.

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I have repeatedly affirmed that a human being, as a human being, lives, strictly speaking, in a world of ideas created by the human mind. But ordinarily the ideas constituting an individual's 'ideal' world are imposed on the individual from the outside and only in rare cases are they well integrated or well harmonized. But a poet or a philosopher gives us an ideal world in which we enjoy a truly harmonious life, if only for a brief spell of time. A poet or a philosopher – to me these are essentially one – gives us a dream world in which we live and experience a reality denied to the boisterous world surrounding us. Each of these dream worlds, conceptual worlds, ideal worlds, constitutes a unique universe of discourse having its special language and its special logic. Different universes of discourse literally give us different worlds to live in.

The originality of a philosopher consists in an original comprehensive vision and the elements of the original vision are necessarily original concepts, forming a special language. The philosopher may choose to express her or his original concepts by constructing new words for them or by borrowing current words and giving them new meanings. Either alternative has advantages and drawbacks, and it is practically impossible for a philosopher to confine herself or himself to the one method or the other exclusively; but in any case to understand a philosopher the reader must take the words in the special sense they have in the

special universe of discourse constituted by the philosopher's total vision. Moreover, the words in a philosopher's special language can never have strictly fixed meanings like mathematical symbols. If they had such fixed meanings they would fail to be true to the literally endless situational variations. The meaning of a word will always necessarily be qualified and modified by its context and the reader must be sensitive to these modifications. That is why the project of replacing our common language with the language of symbolic logic is a delusion. Symbolic logic as a branch of mathematics or as a generalization of mathematics has its uses, but it can never be equal to the creativity of living reality.

As I have been maintaining in all my writings, a philosophical system is an integral universe of discourse. If it is good, it will have intrinsic coherence, but you cannot require it to conform to the rules – to the syntax and semantics – of a different, but possibly equally good, universe of discourse. Plato, judged in Aristotelian terms, is nonsensical; so is Berkeley judged in Humian terms, though these two have a common parent in Locke.

Among his Categories of Explanation (in Section II, Chapter II, *Process and Reality*, p.25) Whitehead includes “That *how* an actual entity *becomes* constitutes *what* that actual entity *is*. ... Its ‘being’ is constituted by its ‘becoming’.” One would say this is pure reductionism if it were not that Whitehead's intention is the polar opposite to that of reductionism. This is another warning that any philosophical statement can only have its meaning in the totality of the philosophy in which it functions.

Thought and language cannot be separated. The language of an original philosopher will necessarily reflect the originality of the philosopher's thought. Whether the philosopher uses newly-formed technical terms, or whether she or he uses a language used by earlier philosophers, or whether she or he uses the common language of everyday life, her or his words and

expressions will have new meanings determined by the totality of the philosopher's thought-system.

A metaphysician weaves a coherent web of concepts, in which the whole defines each of its constituents. This is particularly evident in a well-integrated system, such as Spinoza's system, Leibniz' Monadology, or Whitehead's philosophy of organism. That is why it is wrong, indeed meaningless, to criticize such a system in terms of a different conceptual system.

A highly developed, formally coherent worldview is not as such necessarily conducive to a worthwhile spiritual life. Intelligent materialists and naturalists have such sophisticated and formally coherent worldviews, but they do not thereby necessarily enjoy a refined spiritual life. More to the point, religious dogmatists and fundamentalists may have highly sophisticated theologies but for all that, and maybe because of that, they can be less than human. In all of these groups there may be fine individual characters. They may be kind and generous and may have a genuine appreciation of beauty. What then is the distinguishing trait of what we may call a spiritual life in the philosophical sense? It is that the individual find the ground for her or his valuations within her or his person. That is why theoretical materialists and naturalists ordinarily are virtuous individuals and any number of them can be fine characters, but their worldview will lack the metaphysical dimension and their conscious life will lack the wholeness of reflective subjectivity. This can also be said of 'simple' dogmatists among the religious. But when it comes to fanatic fundamentalists, their mind-set cannot fail to corrupt character. I believe that, even among 'simple believers', those who take their religion seriously are more likely to be morally stunted.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

REASON, RATIONALISM, AND RATIONALITY

1. Reason is the ground of the dignity of a human being, as Socrates has taught us. But reason by itself does not produce knowledge and does not secure the verity of a statement. The virtue of reason is aesthetic (in the modern sense of the term). The hallmark of rationality is coherence; its gift is intelligibility; its fruit is integrity. But rationalism is corrupted when its complete autonomy is compromised. When reason accepts to work with foreign material that it has not subjected to its scrutiny the reason is fake and its rationalism a deception. So the erudite theologians of every creed, who are masters of rationalistic thinking, exude deceptive lies, and scientists who fail to examine anew presuppositions that had given good results in the past can find themselves entangled in a maze of falsities. Only a dialectic that, true to the teaching of Plato, constantly destroys its own

- presuppositions, is genuinely rational. Only a philosophy that offers not knowledge or truth but an imaginative vision is a philosophy for free spirits.
2. There is profound insight in Whitehead's phrase: "the monstrous issues of limited metaphysics and clear logical intellect" (*Science and the Modern World*, p.93). This applies equally to mechanistic philosophy and to dogmatic religion. In both areas we can have astute logical thinking combined with complete blindness to flawed metaphysical foundations. ('Mechanism' is a better designation than 'materialism' for our current scientistic attitude. Matter no longer has any place in the scheme of science, but objectivity, which is the first principle of science, is readily translatable into mechanism.)
 3. A factual statement does not give us knowledge of a thing but only knowledge about a thing. A metaphysical statement, like a poetical expression, does not report what is there but creates a meaningful reality in its own right. Metaphysics, like poetry, gives us neither knowledge of things nor knowledge about things; it gives us understanding, and it is always in the end understanding of our own reality.
 4. Whitehead says in *Science and the Modern World*, "To acquiesce in discrepancy is destructive of candour, and of moral cleanliness. It belongs to the self-respect of intellect to pursue every tangle of thought to its final unravelment" (p.215). Yet we have to realize that the 'final unravelment' we arrive at will always be transitory, it will always be 'final' only for the present context. If our intellect is alive and not dead, it will necessarily soon find that the unravelment leaves questions to be answered and breeds new tangles to be untangled. Whitehead elsewhere says that "true rationalism must always transcend itself by recurrence to the concrete in search of inspiration. A self-satisfied rationalism is in effect a form of anti-rationalism. It means an arbitrary halt at a

particular set of abstractions. This was the case with science.” (The phrase “recurrence to the concrete” in Whitehead’s statement is explained by the fact that he was thinking primarily of rationalism in science.) I can find no better definition of stupidity than contentment with a finally fixed system of thought. Or rather, this is not a definition of stupidity; it is a definition of intellectual death.

5. William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* says:

“The truth is that in the metaphysical and religious sphere, articulate reasons are cogent for us only when our inarticulate feelings of reality have already been impressed in favor of the same conclusion. Then, indeed, our intuitions and our reason work together, and great world-ruling systems like that of the Buddhist or of the Catholic philosophy, may grow up. Our impulsive belief is here always what sets up the original body of truth, and our articulately verbalized philosophy is but its showy translation into formulas. The unreasoned and immediate assurance is the deep thing in us, the reasoned argument is but a surface exhibition. Instinct leads, intelligence does but follow” (p.88).

This is perceptive and true. I have quoted this passage in full in fairness to James, since what he says has its justification in his psychological approach. But it is only half of the truth. It leaves us in the clutches of unreasoned faith.

6. Whitehead speaks of “those elements in Zeno’s paradoxes which are the product of inadequate mathematical knowledge” (*Process and Reality*, p.68). Again he says, “In his ‘Achilles and the Tortoise’ Zeno produces an invalid argument depending on ignorance of the theory of infinite convergent numerical series” (p.69). We cannot take Zeno to task for not taking into consideration theories that had not come into

existence in his time. Zeno showed, once and for all, the incoherence of the abstract notions of space and time as taken by the mathematics and the science of his time and of subsequent times. He showed these were fictions and led to paradoxes when taken for actual things. Our more developed mathematical knowledge and theories such as that of 'infinite convergent numerical series' – I do not pretend to have any knowledge of what that is – may enable us to make meaningful use of the abstract notions of space and time within definite conceptual systems, but in no way invalidate Zeno's refutations. When Whitehead concludes: "Thus this paradox of Zeno is based upon a mathematical fallacy", I would say, Yes, exactly; that fallacy is what Zeno wanted to uncover; the fallacy was not committed by him but by those mathematicians who thought that the fictions that served them so well in their determinate spheres were more than fictions. I think Whitehead's "Simple arithmetic assures us that the series just indicated will be exhausted in the period of one second" is just one of those fruitful absurdities – the notion of infinity, negative numbers, the square root of minus one, the audacity of zero as a number – of which mathematics and science have made and continue to make good use. The series will not be exhausted; by its own logic it is inexhaustible; but, having made use of it for our purposes, we can simply blow it off; the series has never been nor can ever be actual. In my philosophical tale "A Dream" (included in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*) I may have misrepresented Whitehead but I do not think I was wrong about Zeno.

7. There is a very interesting statement of Hume's (quoted by Whitehead in *Process and Reality* on p.139) which, to my mind, shows the quandaries we fall into if, in our philosophical investigations, we start from anything other than the immediacy of experience. It reads: "As to those *impressions*,

which arise from the *senses*, their ultimate cause is, in my opinion, perfectly inexplicable by human reason, and it will always be impossible to decide with certainty, whether they arrive immediately from the object, or are produced by creative power of the mind, or are derived from the Author of our being” (*Treatise*, I, III, V). Once we abandon the totality of immediate experience and think of an independent subject to which arrive impressions arising from senses behind which perhaps lurk independent objects, it will be equally plausible and equally groundless to explain all this by assuming a naïve empiricist realism, a radical solipsism, or a Berkeleyan idealism, none of which can be demonstrably proved or demonstrably refuted. The only secure ground from which we can philosophize intelligently is the totality of immediate experience. All else is conceptual falsification — permissible and useful when openly confessed — Plato’s ‘likely tale’ — but pernicious when pretending to be ‘the truth’.

8. When philosophers criticize one another they overlook that every philosophy is a closed ideal system, a world in its own right, self-coherent, secure in its proper logic; this is what I call a universe of discourse. It is wrong to criticize one system of philosophy in terms of a system foreign to it. The only proper criticism of a genuine system of philosophy is to show that its universe of discourse is narrow or shallow. If the system is incoherent it is not genuine philosophy and is not worth criticizing.
9. For a human being, the one actuality is the immediacy of our experience, and the one reality is our inner reality. All else is imaginative construction. It is ideal representation. It is never complete, never definitive. It is always falsifiable. But it is not illusory. It speaks of our reality, and we are rooted in the All. Our metaphysical yearning for wholeness, our thirst for oneness with the All, is our communion with Reality and is our

participation in eternity. No theoretical representation of the All is definitive, but every genuine theoretical representation of the All gives us insight into the reality of the All.

10. Whitehead says, "The discovery of the true relevance of the mathematical relations disclosed in presentational immediacy was the first step in the intellectual conquest of nature" (*Process and Reality*, p.327). I would rather, changing two key words in the sentence, say that the creation of the notion of mathematical relations in which to clothe 'presentational immediacy' was the first step in the intellectual conquest of nature.
11. I have often said that no determinate formulation of thought is free from contradiction, that no definite articulation of philosophical insight is definitive. It might be thought that in mathematics we have a secure area of certainty. This is not true. Whitehead in *Modes of Thought* writes: "We can misconceive the very meaning of number and of the interconnections of number. The great mathematicians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries misconceived the subject matter of their studies. For example, in respect of the notions of infinitesimals, of the necessary precautions in the use of infinite series, and the doctrine of complex numbers, their discoveries were suffused in error" (p.68). Further on Whitehead says, "Science deals with large average effects, important within certain modes of observation. But in the history of human thought no scientific conclusion has ever survived unmodified by radical increase in our subtleties of relevant knowledge" (p.90). When I insisted on the inevitable contradictoriness in all determinate formulations of thought I had in mind the inherent imperfection of all thinking. But it is equally important to realize that our most exact science can be no more than an approximation because the notion of the absolute regularity of natural processes, which is the basis of

the scientific presumption of causal determinism, is itself merely an approximation. If there were absolute regularity in nature there could be no novelty and no evolution. That is why in Plato's 'divided line' the best empirical science is assigned to the lower section of the higher division and is designated *doxa* (opinion) and not *epistêmê* (knowledge). Whitehead fails to take account of this.

12. Both in the field of theory and in the field of practice, thought progresses through a rhythmic process, alternately narrowing outlook and broadening outlook, specializing and generalizing. Whitehead writes, "To some extent, to understand is always to exclude a background of intellectual incoherence. But Wisdom is persistent pursuit of the deeper understanding, ever confronting intellectual system with the importance of its omissions" (*Adventures of Ideas*, p.52). When we halt at the specializing stage we have technical advance with lack of vision; when we halt at the generalizing stage we have woolly dogmatism without comprehension.
13. Metaphysical insights are dimmed and befogged in ill-advised attempts to support or to explicate them by demonstrations, deductions, or proofs. An insight that a philosopher labors unconvincingly to demonstrate and only succeeds in obscuring, is often given clear, impressive expression in poetry. Philosophers have long been wronging themselves by mistaking their true vocation, thinking that they have to discover factual truths or to reach deductive certainties. These are the domains of science and mathematics respectively, and neither of these can give us insight into reality, nor can they answer a genuinely philosophical question. A philosophical question seeks clarity of vision, and this can only be given by an oracular proclamation directing us to the sole fount and source of understanding which is our own creative reality. The rationality of the philosophical endeavor

consists in coherence and integrity and freedom from the delusion of knowledge. Hence the complement of philosophical understanding is the confession of philosophical ignorance.

14. Whitehead, speaking of 'Historical Foresight' (in Chapter VI of *Adventures of Ideas*) says, "Perhaps, if we knew enough of the laws, then we should understand that the development of the future from the past is completely determined by the details of the past and by these scientific laws which condition all generation" (p.88). Whitehead continues, "Unfortunately our knowledge of scientific laws is woefully defective and our knowledge of the relevant facts of the present and the past is scanty in the extreme." To my mind, this is not the trouble. The if proposition in Whitehead's statement is basically flawed; it embodies what we might call the Laplace fallacy. In the first place, all laws – physical, sociological, legislative – are necessarily general, can never in the nature of things be anything but generalities. No law ever perfectly fits a particular actuality. If God wanted to make laws for all possible situations he would have first to create all the possible situations. In the second place, the future is never "completely determined by the details of the past"; if it were, we would have eternal unvarying recurrence. But every situation is unique and all reality is creative; hence the past 'requires' the future (in Wolfgang Köhler's sense of requiredness) but does not determine the future. The future invariably vindicates the past, does justice to the past, never belies the past, yet it is always a creative fulfillment of the past. Hence, in retrospect we can always find every event fully explained, fully justified, by its antecedents, but given the antecedents the best any god can do is to predict an approximate anticipation of the outcome. Shakespeare having penned the first line in a new sonnet, neither Shakespeare himself nor Laplace-turned-

omniscient-god can know what the last line will be till the last line has been written. I may have been unfair to Whitehead in commenting on his text by taking it out of its sociological context to a metaphysical context, but still I think that Whitehead did not take creativity sufficiently into account. What Whitehead found wrong with scientism was its abstractionism; he did not question its determinism.

15. For our limited human intelligence, everything must be relative, nothing can be absolute. What is good can occasion evil. Truth can produce falsehood and error may help truth. Whitehead writes: "Henri Poincaré points out that instruments of precision, used unreasonably, may hinder the advance of science. For example, if Newton's imagination had been dominated by the errors in Kepler's Laws as disclosed by modern observation, the world might still be waiting for the Law of Gravitation. The Truth must be seasonable" (*Adventures of Ideas*, p.233).
16. To think is to abstract; to abstract is to falsify. "The intellect", as Whitehead says, "fastens on smell as a datum: the animal experiences it as a qualification of his subjective feelings. Our developed consciousness fastens on the sensum as datum: our basic animal experience entertains it as a type of subjective feeling. The experience starts as that smelly feeling, and is developed by mentality into the feeling of that smell" (*Adventures of Ideas*, p.235-6). The smelly feeling is an actuality, the feeling of a smell, as a thought, is a falsehood; the 'smelly feeling' is there, the 'feeling of a smell' is nowhere, and when erudite scholars wrangle about the truth or falsehood of the statement or about the 'reality' of the smell, they are justly sentenced by Truth to the torture of endlessly groping in a dark labyrinth.
17. Scientists share with theologians a common illusion. They think they can enunciate final truths. Scientists, somewhat

more modest than theologians, admit that their extant enunciations – laws, principles, equations – are imperfect, provisional, and subject to revision and qualification, but all their work and all their procedures are based on the assumption that, at least in principle, they are working towards the formulation of laws and principles that will be finally and universally valid, applying to all of nature. In my view, this is an error. Not only are all extant scientific laws abstractions and approximations, but all scientific laws are necessarily so and can never be other than so, the reason being that nature is not a static actuality but is an ongoing creative process, ever developing, ever changing. No god can tell what the state of the universe will be the next moment, because while the state of the universe the next moment will be *conditioned* by the present state of the universe, it will not be *determined* by it. The universe will surprise the god by producing something original. This is not exactly what Plato had in mind when he asserted that all knowledge of the outside world is opinion, but it agrees with it.

18. Every philosophical system is a self-contained web of concepts, an ideal world, more or less intrinsically coherent. It tells us nothing of the outside world, but it enables us to view the outside world in the form of an intelligible pattern of our own creation. I am convinced that Socrates and Kant between them defined for good the limits of our knowledge of the outside world. Socrates said that investigating the things in the world will tell us how things are or how they come to be but will not give us any answers about value or purpose or essence; any questions about these relate to ideas generated by the mind and the answers will be in terms of these ideas and will be wholly concerned with these ideas. Kant said that we know nothing of the phenomenal world other than what our own minds have put into that world. I consider the Socratic

and the Kantian positions to be fully compatible and complementary. Our mental life is concerned with two realms: (1) In the perceptible or phenomenal realm we have superficial knowledge about actual existent things which Plato likened to shadows because they are mutable and never constant; superficial 'knowledge' which Plato would not call knowledge but only opinion, but which is nevertheless of great practical importance for our worldly life. (2) In the intelligible realm we build for ourselves worlds made up of ideas, worlds in which we human beings live the life that sets us apart from our kin in the animal kingdom; worlds that can be blissful but can also be horrendous; worlds of our own making that make the outside world for us a heaven or a hell, but that in no case and in no way tell us anything about the world as it is in itself.

19. With regard to the terminology of Kant's critical system, Kant needlessly exposed himself to the objections of his Empiricist critics by tampering with their established neat distinctions between analytic/a priori and synthetic/a posteriori propositions or judgments. I concede to the Empiricists their division of all, let us say, objectively meaningful statements, into synthetic/a posteriori ones that can be validated or invalidated by observation or experiment on the one hand, and analytic/a priori ones in which the predicate is contained in the subject or can be proved by logical deduction from such propositions. Thus far, the Empiricists, Kant, and I are in agreement. But instead of Kant's wedding of the synthetic to the a priori to breed the hybrid synthetic a priori judgment which the Empiricists find abhorrent, I make a threefold division of propositions: (1) Factual, which relate to the objective world and can be verified or falsified by observation or experiment. (2) Formal which can be logically demonstrated. (3) Creative, statements relating to ideals and values, which are significant, even if, in agreement with the

Positivists and Analytical philosophers, you arbitrarily deny them the designation 'meaningful', and which need neither verification nor demonstration, but shine in the light of their own subjective reality. These include imaginative, moral, and aesthetic statements; they also include mathematical statements and the first principles of all natural science, such as the 'law of causality', which, as Kant saw, are not analytical but are 'synthetic a priori'. — This of course is in agreement with the Socratic distinction between inquiry '*en tois ergois*' and inquiry '*en tois logois*'.

20. S. Körner broadens Kant's definition of an analytic judgment to make it apply to judgments that are not of the subject-predicate form (at the same time ridding the definition of the ambiguity in the term 'contains'). Körner's revised definition runs: "A judgment is analytic if, and only if, its denial would be a contradiction in terms or, what amounts to the same, if it is *logically* necessary or, again in other words, if its negation is *logically* impossible" (Kant, 1955, p.23). Körner then adds, "A judgment which is not analytic is synthetic." This of course means that the denial of a synthetic judgment would not be a contradiction in terms, which again means that it is not necessarily true. So far all parties would agree, but I want to move further. What I term a factual (Kant's synthetic a posteriori) judgment must be either true or false, but what I term a creative statement is neither true nor false. It is (if coherent) 'real' (meaningful, significant): both Socrates' "Better to suffer injustice than to commit injustice" and Milton's Satan's "Better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven" bring into being real alternative worlds in which Socrates and Satan live and have their respective modes of being. This is the subjective reality, the metaphysical dimension, that Kant timidly sought to rescue in his transcendental system, and that Empiricists negate when they

hold, in opposition to Kant, that “no judgment can possibly be both *a priori* and synthetic”.

21. “Too large a generalisation leads to mere barrenness. It is the large generalisation, limited by a happy particularity, which is the fruitful conception” (A. N. Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, Chapter II, “Mathematics as an Element in the History of Thought”, p.44). Analytical Philosophers fail to absorb what Whitehead says here. Symbolic logic buys its generality at the price of barrenness. It is the element of ‘a happy particularity’, which itself must always be unanalyzed, arbitrary, creative, that gives birth to a ‘fruitful conception’ and it is what connects the generality to the living world.
22. Augustine’s arguments in *On the Immortality of the Soul* are sheer word-jugglery. Augustine was a rhetorician and he argues like a rhetorician. Socrates’ argument sometimes, as for instance in *Protagoras* 332-333, may seem to be of the same sort. But there is a difference. Augustine argues to reach a positive conclusion. Socrates in the *Protagoras* passage argues to show that our notions about virtue as a whole and about particular virtues are all confused and that when ‘Protagoras’ confidently affirms that justice, courage, modesty, and wisdom are separate parts of virtue, he is talking about what he doesn’t understand. Socrates never uses argument to reach a positive conclusion. His positive statements, his moral convictions, are insights into the reality of our moral life. He never seeks to discover or deduce or prove his moral insights.
23. At *Protagoras* 333b-c Socrates asks: *ara tis soi dokei adikôn anthrôpos sôphronein, hoti adikei*; Trying to keep as close as possible to the Greek: “Do you think a person committing injustice acts reasonably in committing injustice?” Or: “Do you think that in committing injustice a person can be acting reasonably?” To answer this question either way is not to give a true or false answer but to reveal the true nature of one’s

inner being; it is to show what one thinks constitutes the true worth of a human being.

24. Hume, accepting Locke's view that the senses provide us with our knowledge, asserted that we have no justification for holding that one thing causes another. To meet this challenge, which undermines all science, Kant said that the idea of causation is an *a priori* form that the mind casts on the matter of experience, thereby giving us understanding. (This is basically the insight embodied in the much misunderstood and much maligned Platonic Forms, based on the Socratic distinction between the intelligible and the perceptible, as I have been affirming in all my writings.) Now we are told that modern physics questions the principle that every event must have a cause. It is said that, at the level of the most fundamental particles and events, the principle does not hold. To my mind it would be wrong for philosophers to find in this support for their rejection of causal determinism. This can only mean that at that fundamental level particles and events do not appear to be subject to causal laws that scientists are able to formulate. But it is unthinkable, in the strictest sense of the word unthinkable, that any event should be without reason. To abandon the principle of sufficient reason is to undermine all thinking and all thought: it amounts to resigning ourselves to the belief that, not only the external universe, but our very being, is ultimately and utterly unintelligible. What are we to say then? Scientists may humbly say that at that fundamental level particles and events must be subject to laws that continue to evade them. Poets may say that at that level particles and events have a will of their own. Philosophers will say that we have to think of all reality as creative and that, while they have no desire to encroach on the domain of science nor to rein in the imagination of poets, we know – and it is the only thing we know immediately, positively and most indubitably – that on

the moral plane, *that* is the plain truth; that, as human beings, when we are truly human, our fundamental and essential reality is a free, creative will.

25. Whitehead, giving examples of his four classes of “the topics of physical science”, says, “It seems doubtful whether a shade of color, or the qualitative element in the performance of a musical symphony, are to be reckoned as concerned with nature or mentality” (*Adventures of Ideas*, p.44). Here Whitehead seems to be revising his earlier position (in *Science and the Modern World*) affirming the objectivity of ‘secondary qualities’. But the question is really meaningless. If only the totality of the immediate experience is what deserves to be called real (in a lower sense of the word ‘real’), then any distinctions or divisions are abstractions and are necessarily arbitrary and are all fraught with falsehood.
26. In the human sphere, nothing can be absolute. Ideals, principles, and values are absolute in the abstract, but in practice they are limited and qualified by other ideals, principles, and values. When in human life, individual or communal, certain ideals, principles, and values conflict with others, it is unwise and harmful to seek to settle the issue by logical argument. There we inevitably have antinomies as baffling as the theological and metaphysical antinomies disclosed by Kant. Social and political controversies raging around such problems as abortion and euthanasia can never be settled as long as the contending parties are under the illusion that the issue is one of right and wrong. Such issues can only be reasonably discussed and dealt with when it is recognized that there is no perfection in our actual world. In dealing with such problems there must be mutual sympathy and understanding, a spirit of give and take, and realization that all settlements can only be provisional and subject to eventual revision and qualification. Also political and social problems,

problems for instance in the sphere of educational policy, involving such polarities as freedom and control, privacy and discipline, can only be reasonably dealt with when we realize that what is right in principle must necessarily be subject to qualification in this our imperfect world.

27. William James speaks of “the complexity of the moral life, and the mysteriousness of the way in which facts and ideals are interwoven” (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, p.346). It is not that ideals are qualified by facts but that in the world of facts certain ideals will clash with other ideals. In such circumstances to maintain one ideal to the exclusion of the other results in an unwholesome mode of living. James relates case after case of ‘saintliness’ gone awry by exclusive concentration on a single ‘virtue’. “No simple answer is possible”, as William James rightly says. In public life and in the political domain to insist on a simple answer is to create a lasting conflict, as we see happening in the heated controversies about bioethical issues such as abortion and euthanasia and also about the relative claims of personal rights and public security. The insistence on a simple answer is the sin of logicism. In such cases there must be give and take, there must be mutual sympathy and understanding, and all parties must confess that in an imperfect world we have to accept imperfect solutions.

CHAPTER TWELVE

EMPIRICISM

1. The advance of modern science from the seventeenth century onwards is commonly seen as a triumph of reason. Whitehead more perceptively sees that it was a revolt from the ‘unbridled rationalism’ of the Middle Ages and a “definite abandonment of this method in favour of the study of the empirical fact of antecedents and consequences” (*Science and the Modern World*, p.53).
2. Every specific science presents us with a universe of discourse constructed to suit its chosen subject-matter but not good for dealing with things outside its own field. Mathematics, which has the most general of all theoretical concepts, can deal with all things in the world in so far as we are concerned with their numeral or figural relations, but cannot tell us anything about their nature or quality. Biology was retarded and perhaps continues to be retarded by the dominance of physical concepts. Psychology continues to be in a maze because it has

failed to, or has not been allowed to, form its own universe of discourse, so that we can find psychological insight in the novel or the cinema but in vain seek it in scientific psychology.

3. A thing is what it is – is a *what*, a *such* – only under a form produced by the mind. This is the great insight insisted on by Plato, which Aristotle misunderstood, and which we are still far from appreciating fully. No thing is even a brute and dumb *this* until the mind singles it out and confers on it its *thisness*. On the level of empirical science, as Whitehead tells us: “Induction presupposes metaphysics. In other words, it rests upon an antecedent rationalism” (*Science and the Modern World*, p.59).
4. “The great characteristic of the mathematical mind is its capacity for dealing with abstractions; and for eliciting from them clear-cut demonstrative trains of reasoning, entirely satisfactory so long as it is those abstractions which you want to think about” (Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p.71). Our Empiricist scientists and philosophers are entirely oblivious of Whitehead’s concluding qualifying phrase in this statement; for them their ‘clear-cut demonstrative trains of thought’ are ‘entirely satisfactory’ and that’s that; they do not realize that there is a whole world of reality they are leaving out — not only do they not realize it, they ferociously deny there is any such reality. Whitehead aptly speaks of “those clear-cut trenchant intellects, immovably encased in a hard shell of abstractions” (p.74).
5. It is amazing that today philosophers of the Empiricist and Analytical schools think, speak, and write as if Whitehead’s *Science and the Modern World*, not to speak of his later works, had never been written. More amazing still, it is incredible to think that Bertrand Russell did not read the work of his friend and collaborator on their great *Principia Mathematica*; and yet it is

clear that Russell did not absorb the basic message of Whitehead's seminal small volume: this is as amazing but perhaps also as natural as Russell's complete failure to grasp the message of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

6. I reproduce below at some length an important passage from *Process and Reality*, which I think I have already quoted, partly or in full, somewhere else:

“The *Timaeus* of Plato, and the *Scholium* of Newton ... are the two statements of cosmological theory which have had the chief influence on Western thought. To the modern reader, the *Timaeus*, considered as a statement of scientific details, is in comparison with the *Scholium* simply foolish. But what it lacks in superficial detail, it makes up for by its philosophic depth. If it be read as an allegory, it conveys profound truth; whereas the *Scholium* is an immensely able statement of details which, although abstract and inadequate as a philosophy, can within certain limits be thoroughly trusted for the deduction of truths at the same level of abstraction as itself. The penalty of its philosophical deficiency is that the *Scholium* conveys no hint of the limits of its own application. The practical effect is that the readers, and almost certainly Newton himself, so construe its meaning as to fall into what I have elsewhere termed the ‘fallacy of misplaced concreteness.’ It is the office of metaphysics to determine the limits of the applicability of such abstract notions.

“The *Scholium* betrays its abstractness by affording no hint of that aspect of self-production, of generation, of φύσις, of *natura naturans*, which is so prominent in nature. For the *Scholium*, nature is merely, and completely, *there*, externally designed and obedient. The full sweep of the modern doctrine of evolution would have confused the Newton of

the *Scholium*, but would have enlightened the Plato of the *Timaeus*. ..." (p.93).

But what Whitehead says here, fine and profound as it is, does not say it all. Plato makes Timaeus admonish Socrates:

"Don't therefore be surprised, Socrates, if on many matters concerning the gods and the whole world of change we are unable in every respect and on every occasion to render a consistent and accurate account. ... both you and I ... are merely human ... and should not look for anything more than a likely story in such matters" (29c-d, tr. Lee). For Plato the *Timaeus* was simply a pastime; the proper work of philosophy is not to look outside us but within us.

7. Whitehead rings the knell of materialism when he says that "what has vanished from the field of ultimate scientific conceptions is the notion of vacuous material existence with passive endurance, with primary individual attributes, and with accidental adventures. Some features of the physical world can be expressed in that way. But the concept is useless as an ultimate notion in science, and in cosmology" (*Process and Reality*, p.309). But Empiricists do not seem to have heard the news.
8. All impressions "arise in the soul from unknown causes" as Hume asserted. There can be no scientific 'explanation' of any of the immediate givennesses of experience (Whitehead's 'presentational immediacy'). There can only be interpretation in terms of a myth created by the mind.
9. It is futile to inquire about the relation of soul or mind to body. The moment you think of mind and body as two, the moment you admit their duality, you have negated the possibility of understanding. Mind and body together are the whole that is

true being — the ultimate reality, the ultimate mystery. There is no explanation of being, no explanation of reality, no explanation of life, no explanation of mind: these are all one thing, the one thing that the Hindus call Brahma, that Plato called the Form of the Good, that Spinoza called *Deus sive Natura*, uniting *natura naturana* and *natura naturata* in one.

10. Empiricist materialism (naturalism, mechanism, scientism, the tags are many, the substance one) has appropriated to itself the designation Monism. To counter this the opponents of materialism have been describing themselves as Dualists to indicate their conviction that matter (the objectively given) is not the whole of reality. I am decidedly on the side of these but cannot accept the designation they have adopted, because it is strongly suggestive of the Cartesian assumption of two not only distinct but totally separate substances. For me reality is one and whole. We know ourselves as one whole person, ever present in one whole experience, which in thinking we slice up, split, splinter, fragment into this and that abstracted concepts. If I had to choose between the terms Monism and Dualism I would rather call myself a Monist, but as this is now generally taken in the sense attached to it by the materialist Empiricists, I prefer to refrain from using either of these terms. If I have to indicate my position by a special word, I might call myself a Holist. Plato's position also has, with some historical plausibility, been described as dualist, but I still find this misleading and confusing.
11. The problem of the emergence of mind is a pseudo-problem. Science can never explain the emergence of mind from matter. Science can describe the process of the appearance of mind as we know it in humans, but that will not explain how it came about. We have our immediate awareness of our mind-and-body as an integral whole. We can then either think of mind and body as always and everywhere one thing, as the ultimate

reality and ultimate mystery, or we can choose to start with matter as the primal given and we would then have a double mystery on our hands: the inexplicability of the emergence of mind from matter and the inexplicability of the existence of matter. There is no way of reaching certainty one way or the other, but personally I find thinking of ultimate reality as intelligent more satisfactory to my mind. What is more important is that what concerns me as a human being is my inner, total reality as creative intelligence. All theorizing about what is beyond my immediate reality, immediate awareness, is only a likely *muthos* as Plato clearly saw. (In these lines I have used 'matter' and 'body' interchangeably. Of course, dear old matter has long ago evaporated in the realm of scientific thought. It only survives as what is objectively given, and that we may call either matter or body.)

12. The notion of transcendence is tricky. When we say that the mind transcends the body it is wrong to take that as meaning that the mind is set over and above the body. When we say that the mind transcends the body we mean that the mind cannot be exhausted by the constituents of the body or by the events of the body. But the mind is not outside the body or beside the body. The mind has no being apart from the body. The mind transcends the body *because* it never exists, is never an existent, but is the reality of the body, is the *hupostasis* (borrowing the term from theology) in which the manifoldity of the body has its oneness, in which the temporality of the body has eternity. The poet is not the sum of her or his feelings, emotions, thoughts, visions, any more than she or he is her or his body or brain; the poet is not the creator creating the poem but is the creativity becoming incarnate in the poem. (All language falters when it seeks to voice reality.)
13. To think, we have to abstract from our total experience. This is inevitable, but it should not blind us to the truth that what is actual,

what we are immediately aware of, is our total, living experience. Whitehead repeatedly and persistently insists on this: “The instinctive interpretations which govern human life and animal life presuppose a contemporary world throbbing with energetic values. It requires considerable ability to make the disastrous abstraction of our bare sense perceptions from the massive insistency of our total experiences” (*Adventures of Ideas*, p.212).

14. Whitehead, if I understand him correctly, asserts that all exact scientific observation is derived from the data directly provided by the activity of the sense-organs, and that the scientific categories of thought are obtained elsewhere (*Adventures of Ideas*, p.217). To my mind, this ‘elsewhere’ is Socrates’ intelligible realm and is Kant’s pure reason, and I cannot see how Whitehead fails to appreciate the points of agreement between Plato’s epistemology, Kant’s epistemology, and his own. In any case, I find in Whitehead’s position confirmation of my assertion that empirical experience never delivers to us any facts, that a fact is a fact only by grace of an interpretation given by the mind apart from which the givennesses of experience are bereft of meaning. I do not see this as in any way affected by Whitehead’s insistence that philosophic interpretation be based on a broader conception of experience as based on “the living body as a whole” as “the living organ of experience” (p.217). The feelings and emotions engendered in the totality of the human being through the agency of the body also remain sheer happenings of and in the natural world and outside the sphere of thought, beyond or below the plane of subjective awareness, unless and until they are clothed in forms conferred by the mind, or, to use Kant’s language, provided by pure reason.
15. Scientists see a higher level of complexity as a sufficient explanation for the origination of new forms of life because that is all they can observe objectively. They do not appreciate

that what can be observed objectively is the finished entity; even when they are presumably observing a process, their objective methods do not give them access to the inner driving force of the process; what they observe are Zenonian separate, static, finished moments of the process. The effulgence of the living, creative experience can only be experienced subjectively, not observed objectively. That is the reality that eludes and will always elude objective observation.

16. How we come by knowledge is an empirical question. We can approach the problem psychologically, methodologically, theoretically, and we can and will continue to amass useful information about how we come by knowledge and how best we can obtain usable and fairly secure knowledge. But how knowledge is possible, what knowledge is, is a mystery that we fool ourselves into thinking we have resolved, but that will always agitate minds that are alive enough to wonder — and the only honest, intelligent answer to the question, What is knowledge?, is: Knowledge is knowledge, is a primary reality, an original dimension of reality.
17. A flower springs from mud. But the flower is not mud. The flower is an original form, a new reality. If the chemist or the botanist is content with the elements of earth, air, and light, I do not grudge them that. But the poet and the philosopher find the reality in the radiance and the fragrance of the flower, and the chemist and the botanist should not deny them that.
18. William James wrote: “Nature in her unfathomable designs had mixed us of clay and flame, of brain and mind, that the two things hang indubitably together and determine each other’s being but how or why, no mortal may ever know” (*Principles of Psychology*, 1918). James was perceptive and honest. Unlike the Empiricists and Analysts of our day who are blind to the problem, James confessed we have an insoluble riddle here. But the riddle is only insoluble as long as we regard the brain and the

mind, or rather the body and the mind, as two things and seek to find out how they are connected, how they interact. The riddle disappears when we say that the body, all of the body, is the individual human being, is all of the individual human being, and that the mind is the mind of the whole body, of the whole individual, and that the whole that is body and mind in one is the person. The body is the person seen from the outside, the mind is the person seen from the inside, but only one person can see the mind of a particular individual person from the inside, and there is no way whatever to see the mind, any mind, in any other way: to seek to observe it, measure it, test it as an object, that is like asking to see the sight of the eye, to see the power of seeing of the eye. The problem is a pseudo-problem, and only our dogmatic obsession with the objective and the measurable and the testable as the only 'reality' blinds us to the reality of the real reality. But the problem is an old one and Plato diagnosed it in the simile of the Battle of the Gods and the Giants (*Sophist*, 245e-246e) more than twenty-four centuries ago.

19. The assumption that scientific rationalism implies absolute determinism is an article of faith to Empiricists but is not supported by reason or by the principles of empirical science. While scientists may have some excuse for holding on to the assumption because it suits their practical purposes, it is odd that philosophers accept it without question. Not only does Spinoza negate human freedom (and even divine freedom) to uphold causal determinism, but even Kant finds it necessary to resort to devious means to exempt freedom of the will from the imperious demands of causal determinism. It is high time for scientists to admit that our scientific laws are and will always remain approximations that do not rule out spontaneity and origination in the sphere of becoming.
20. To preclude a possible misunderstanding, I must explain that I deny determinism not to open the way to a divine whim, but to

affirm universal creativity in which the requiredness inherent in the existential moment issues in creative affirmation whereby the babe breeds anew the mother that gave it birth.

21. On what is all scientific advance based? On ideas; creative ideas that just pop up in a creative mind; they have no actual existence anywhere, they have no being except in the mind. Shall we say they have no 'reality'? But it is they that give all actual existents what reality they have; they are what is real. What I am saying here looks so banal, yet this thought which Socrates and Plato saw as of the utmost importance and which, when stated so simply, is admitted even by our materialistic Empiricists nonchalantly, is far from being properly appreciated by our scientists and our philosophers. That is why I keep going back to it again and again.
22. William James, a confessed empiricist but with the experience of a psychologist, wisely says, "In spite of the appeal which this impersonality of the scientific attitude makes to a certain magnanimity of temper, I believe it to be shallow, and I can state my reason in comparatively few words. The reason is that, so long as we deal with the cosmic and the general, we deal only with the symbols of reality, but *as soon as we deal with private and personal phenomena as such, we deal with realities in the completest sense of the term*" (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, p.475-6).
23. In a footnote to page 476 William James cites "Lotze's doctrine that the only meaning we can attach to the notion of a thing as it is 'in itself' is by conceiving it as it is *for* itself". That indeed is the only way anything can have a meaning, but we should remember that it is a meaning we *confer* on the thing, not a meaning we *find* in it. In things outside us there is no meaning; all meaning is engendered by the mind and is nowhere but in the mind. This is a point where I part company with Whitehead and go back to Socrates-Plato.

24. The basic error of modern thinking is the identification of reality with the objective. British Empiricism has consolidated this error, but its origins can be traced back to Descartes who, while splitting apart the thinking substance and the extended substance, made of the thinking side an object and saw nothing in it but what it thinks, overlooking the act of thinking, the active principle. He divided the person into subject and object and then deprived the subject of its subjectivity. This led to the rationalist thinking that had its starting point in Descartes to be viciously contaminated by the Empiricist disease. Thus we find that even for Kant our soul, our freedom, our idea of God, are assumptions that we have to take on trust but that we cannot know. Our soul as our inner reality, our freedom as our creative activity, our idea of God as the ideal of wholeness and perfection through which we lend intelligibility to our own being and to the world — these cannot be ‘known’ because they cannot be made into objects, and the reason they cannot be made into objects is simply that they are real, their reality cannot be phenomenalized, as Kant should have known, or as he indeed half-knew. This is what Plato prophetically proclaimed when he affirmed that the Form of the Good transcends *ousia* and transcends *epistêmê*.
25. Whitehead says in *Process and Reality* (1929), “It must be remembered that the physicists’ energy is obviously an abstraction. The concrete fact, which is the organism, must be a complete expression of the character of a real occurrence” (p.51). Begging Whitehead’s pardon I would say we have to go further: while affirming that the physicists’ energy is a working fiction, we cannot rest even with the organism as what is ultimately real, but have to go full circle and, with the Plato of the *Sophist*, assert that it is the energy, the activity, that is really real.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE SOUL

The concept of the soul has a long history during which it passed through many metamorphoses. Concepts develop and evolve as much as animal species. Just as the human being evolved from the amoeba, the concept of the soul evolved from the primitive notion of the ghost of the distant friend that visits people in their dreams or the ghost of the departed relative that visits its kin in dreams or visions, and from Homer's shadows meandering dumbly through Hades, up to the philosophical concept. Perhaps it was Heraclitus who first identified the soul with the inner reality of a person. Socrates and Plato gave prominence and emphasis to the idea of the *psuchê* as our inner reality and the ground of our worth. The best thing that Christianity did and the greatest service it rendered to civilization was its adoption and dissemination of this Socratic-Platonic conception of the soul. But the idea is still hazy in our minds. More than twenty centuries after Plato and more than sixteen centuries after the rise

of Christianity, Descartes could still entertain the inane idea of providing the soul with a physical lodging in the pineal gland. And today we find it difficult to comprehend that the soul has any kind of being or meaning.

Those who deny the existence of the soul are completely in the right and are completely in the wrong. The soul is not an entity and therefore cannot exist. Aristotle auspiciously defined the soul as the form of the body. A form cannot be a particular form apart from the particular body of which it is the form. A body cannot even be a body apart from the form of which it is the body. On the theoretical plane, the concept of the soul, like all concepts, is an abstraction, a working fiction. But in living reality the soul is the enduring locus of the creative activity that is all the reality we know. The reality of what does not exist, or more accurately stated, the reality of what is not an existent, that is the seeming paradox that the modern scientifically trained mind finds difficult to comprehend.

The soul is not a thing, not a fixed, determinate actuality. It is an activity. We find it difficult to think of an activity without a substratum sustaining the activity. This difficulty of ours stems from our being habituated to thinking that only the objective is real. But we have to realize that, all actuality being transient, constantly vanishing, the only reality is the creativity that perpetually, ceaselessly, brings into being this transient, vanishing actuality that we deem substantial. If we say that the reality in a human being, the reality of a human being, is the mind, we have to understand that the mind that is real, that is itself reality, is not a substance, not a thing, never a *this*, but is the creative activity itself. That is why I prefer to speak of ultimate reality not as a mind, but as creative intelligence, as Creative Eternity that transcends temporality, and in transcending temporality transcends all actuality. The Shakespeare that created all those glorious dramas and poems never existed; he was never

a determinate, substantial mind; he was a creative intelligence, or, still better, an intelligent creativity. Science tells us that even Shakespeare's body – “this too too solid flesh” – never was a *this*, but always a process of becoming, even the bone, even the skull and even the brain housed in the skull. So also Shakespeare's mind never was a *this*, never existed: the reality that was Shakespeare, the reality that created *Hamlet*, never existed but was always the reality of intelligent creativity. In the same way I say that God does not exist, but is real: God is the Reality that breeds ever-vanishing actuality.

To me, my soul (mind) is not an entity, it is an aspect of my total being. I also think of mind as an aspect of all being, but this, like Kant's belief in God as a postulate of Practical Reason, is not a thing of reason but of faith. My mind, soul, or inner reality, is the only reality of which I have immediate cognizance. All else, the whole world, with its distant stars, its obtrusive sounds and colors, Johnson's hard rock that was to give the lie to Berkeley, my own “too, too solid flesh” — all that is a pageant of fleeting shadows. In this I am entirely on the side of Plato. I am also wholly with Plato in holding that all of our knowledge of the external world, all the product of our ‘exact sciences’, is opinion, as Plato maintained, or rough, lifeless abstractions as Bergson and Whitehead saw. All the product of our science, however exact is yet approximate, however certain is yet uncertain, always subject to further correction and refinement. And this is not accidental, this is necessarily so because the determinate formulations of thought can never encompass the creativity of reality.

A person who seeks to affirm her or his spirituality without giving it some positive expression, some positive realization, will necessarily be entangled in a hopeless maze, in the same way and for the same reason as the scientists who are trying to find the mind in the recesses of the brain. The soul, the realm or locus of

spirituality, is pure form, and form cannot be caught, cannot be objectified. It can only be realized in activity, and can only be subjectively experienced in the act. The reality of the soul is its creativity — it is not a *this*, it is not even a *what*, it is a *thus*, a quality of being or a plane of being.

When Plato spoke of the soul as being apart from the body he introduced into philosophy an error that has done grave damage. Christianity consolidated this error in its doctrine of a life beyond our earthly life. Descartes renewed the error in his doctrine of two separate substances, *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. Modern philosophers who purported to rid us of heaven and hell along with Descartes' 'ghost in the machine', instead of restoring the wholeness of the personality of the human being, simply threw overboard the reality of our inner reality. Curiously, while apparently rejecting the duality of soul and body or mind and body, they reinstated it as the duality of subject and object, making of the theoretical distinction a factual separation, and continued to wrestle with the troublesome problems of the relations of the two where there are no relations and no problems because in truth we have not two things but one. More curiously still, while busying themselves with the pseudo-problems arising from the theoretical distinction between the subjective and the objective, they are completely oblivious of the true subjectivity of the subject, which to them is nothing but a negligible faint reflection of the object.

The insoluble problems engendered by the separation of subject and object are just one instance of the labyrinthine quandaries thinkers create for themselves by taking their theoretical distinctions for final actualities. All thinking starts from a whole and, properly, must end with a whole. To complete the journey, the thinker must first break up the initial whole to form the new whole. The insoluble problems – insoluble simply because the problems are fake – arise when we stop half-way,

forgetting that the separations in the whole were arbitrary markings made by us for a specific purpose. Wordsworth expresses this with exemplary lucidity in the following lines:

That false secondary power
By which we multiply distinctions, then
Deem that our puny boundaries are things
That we perceive, and not that we have made.

Wordsworth, *The Prelude*, II, 221-4.

IMMORTALITY

In the *Phaedo* ‘Socrates’ advances several arguments for the immortality of the soul. The arguments, one and all, are openly confessed to be inconclusive. Yet the *Phaedo* gives us a deep and lasting impression of the divinity and eternity of the soul. The notion of immortality as survival of the personality of the person after death, to my mind, clouds and obscures the profounder notion of the eternity of the soul as the reality of being on a plane transcending temporality. The confusion of the notions of immortality and eternity is regrettable. Even Spinoza, after clearly portraying the reality of the soul (mind) in its unity with the one ultimate Reality, cannot avoid giving the impression of affirming the survival of individual souls. Even Whitehead, in a valuable essay (originally delivered as the Ingersoll Lecture at the Harvard Divinity School in 1941 and included in *Essays in Science and Philosophy*, 1948) cannot keep the notion of immortality free from admixture with the idea of temporal everlastingness.

The common notion of immortality is inseparable of the concept of the soul as a separable and separate entity. The idea of the soul as an entity leads into endless errors and contradictions. We should think of the soul as a plane of being. Just as life is a plane of being and is not an entity separate from the constituents

of the living organism but is the living organism living, so the soul is not an entity other than the total person but is the personality of the person, the person being none other than the body on the plane of personality, of spirituality, of selfhood, of soulness.

Equally with materialists who deny the being of the soul, I, who maintain that the soul is the only reality we know, find it meaningless to speak of the survival of the soul after the dissolution of the body, because the soul to me is not and cannot be an entity apart from the body, a particular existent, but is a plane of realization of the total person. The soul is the reality of the person on the plane of creativity. The person, the personality of the person, is not at any moment a fixed actuality, is not at any moment a thing, an existent, but is the act, the flash of light that flares up, is real, is in eternity, and then is no more. Those vanishing moments of eternity are all the reality we have, all the reality we know. When I die, I, the person I, is no more. When the time comes I will be contented to say with Walter Savage Landor, "I warmed both hands before the fire of life, / It sinks, and I am ready to depart."

THE MIND

In Plato *psuchê*, *nous*, *phronêsis* are interchangeable terms. This is as it should be for all of these refer to our inner reality. This inner reality of ours is not an object, not an entity, not an existent thing. It is not a substance that thinks as Descartes maintained but is the thinking of the thinking subject. And it is not separate from the body. The mind is the reality of the body without which the body has no reality, and the body is the actuality of the mind without which the mind has no actuality. Spinoza affirms this when he tells us that "the mind and body are one and the same thing, which, now under the attribute of thought, now under the

attribute of extension, is conceived.” (Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part III, Prop. II, Note, tr. Andrew Boyle.)

We are born to find ourselves in a world other than ourselves. But this statement is inaccurate. When ‘we’ are born ‘we’ are not ‘we’ and the world around us is not a world for us. It is only when we learn to distinguish ourselves from what is not ourselves that ‘we’ become ‘we’ and the world becomes an outside world for us. We as we and the outside world come into being simultaneously and by the same act. And as the world outside us only becomes a world for us by an act of the mind so also all the things in that world only have meaning and only have reality by virtue of the ideas that the mind casts on them. As I wrote somewhere, when a peasant boy sits by a brook with his faithful dog beside him and the moon comes up in the sky, the dog has the impression of a bright disc but the boy sees the moon.

Scientists and Empiricist philosophers, having banished the mind, are trying to convince us that we have no need of the mind since we have the brain. I have written numerous articles (included in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009) in which I sought to unravel the entanglements and confusions of the quandaries of the mind-brain pseudo-problem that philosophers created for themselves out of nothing, a problem that is insoluble simply because it is not a genuine problem. In dealing with the question I have often felt uneasy for seeming to trespass on the realm of science where I do not pretend to have any competence. Now I give the following excerpts from someone who has the competence.

Richard Schain, a philosopher who studied and taught neurology academically for a considerable time, clearly rejects the possibility that brain-science, under whatever name it may come, can enlighten us on the metaphysical nature of the mind. In his autobiographical *Behold the Philosopher: A Memoir* (2007), chapter 5, “Life in Academia”, he writes:

“One might think that neurology would be an ideal medical specialty for someone who had been drawn to philosophy and had a continuing if subliminal interest in philosophical questions. After all the brain is supposed to be the home of the mind and the source of all thought, no matter how esoteric it might be. The brain is supposed to be where all mental processes happen, including philosophy, and he who knows how the brain works should be privy to all the mysteries of the human mind. In fact, today there is a subdivision of philosophy called ‘neuropsychology’ that aspires to this goal. However, just the opposite was the case for me. The more I learned about the brain mechanisms with all the details of neuronal structures, synapses, neural transmitters, electrical activity, etc., etc., the more I came to believe that physical explanations could never explain the nature of thought and how it arose in *Homo sapiens*. I could not envision any chemical or electrical event giving rise to the thoughts in my mind. I grew to believe there is a different order of reality that involved all thought” (p.28).

In chapter 6, “Breakout!”, of the same book Schain writes:

“It has often been assumed that because I was trained in neurology and performed research in the neurosciences for many years, I would naturally orient my philosophical thought toward the mind-brain problem. Nothing could be further from the truth. My knowledge of the details of the neurosciences has led me to conclude that there is no way that brain chemical or electrical activity can give rise, *de novo*, to the human mind. It is beyond my purview to imagine that the electrical currents or chemical transformations can yield human thought with all its qualities and ramifications. Nor has the contemporary infatuation with the computer as a behavioral model of the

brain changed my ideas in any way. Simple data transformation cannot independently give rise to the creative power of *Homo sapiens*; there must be another factor to my way of thinking. This factor is the metaphysical mind which occupies a realm of reality distinct from the material world. Avoiding or rejecting this thought seems to me to be an act of intellectual dishonesty occasioned by the monism dogma of science. ...” (p.38).

The reality of the mind is self-evident and is a mystery, it is as indubitable as it is inexplicable, and that is that.

FREEDOM

The so-called problem of the freedom of the will that has kept philosophers at loggerheads for centuries combines in fact two different issues, and while both are equally pseudo-problems, they stem from two different sources and their solution or resolution must proceed along different lines. The first is theological, arising from the religious doctrine, particularly within monotheistic religions, of the omniscience of God, whereby God is believed to have known from the beginning of creation not only the ultimate fate but all the detailed doings of every individual. This is usually but not necessarily fortified by the doctrine that God has willfully decreed from the beginning of creation not only the fate but all the doings of every individual. Now the religions that uphold these beliefs usually also inconsistently maintain that human beings are free agents and are responsible for their doings. This obviously poses the problem of how to reconcile the divine foreknowledge and predestination with the freedom of the individual. The second version of the problem arose in modern times when scientists combined their faith in mathematical certainty with the doctrine of physical causality and came up with the belief that all the occurrences in

the natural world are irrevocably determined by their antecedents. This belief was given its classic expression by Pierre Laplace (1749-1827) in his *Philosophical Essay on Probabilities*. Obviously this tidy rationalistic determinism is as inimical to human freedom as the arbitrary decree of a willful deity and philosophers have been wrestling with the question of the compatibility or incompatibility of such determinism with the freedom of the will.

Both the theological and the scientific versions of the problem have been complicated by the confusion of freedom of the will with freedom of choice and also by the false opposition assumed between necessity and freedom. In Spinoza's system there is absolute necessity but a rational being is free in as much as she or he acts in conformity with her or his true nature. Spinoza, consistently with his presuppositions, denied any freedom beyond that. Leibniz admitted the necessity presupposed by Spinoza, but to avoid clashing with the Church, resorted to logical tricks to reconcile divine foreknowledge with human freedom.

More recently only professional theologians have been concerned with the theological version of the problem. Other philosophers have been busy with the scientific version, and here the confusion between freedom of will and freedom of choice has been responsible for the heated and interminable controversies between those who affirm and those who deny the compatibility of the freedom of the will with causal determinism. All choice is necessarily conditioned. The only unconditioned act, the only truly autonomous act, can be none other than a creative act. But even if they could get this muddle cleared they would, in my opinion, inevitably fail to resolve the problem as long as they accept the premise of causal determinism as unquestionably true. I have dealt with the confusion of will and choice in *Let Us Philosophize*, 1998, 2008, Bk. II, Ch. 4 and in "Free Will as

Creativity” (*The Sphinx and the Phoenix*, 2009) where I examined and commented on some representative contemporary approaches to the controversy and do not intend to go into it again here.

Spinoza’s conception of freedom as autonomy, based on the important distinction between action and passion, is consistent with his rationalistic determinism, but leaves no room for spontaneity in human behavior or for novelty in the processes of nature. This applies equally to Kant and to our contemporary Empiricists with their implicit acceptance of causal determinism. Human spontaneity and novelty in nature are only intelligible if we acknowledge creativity as an original principle of reality. Creativity, spontaneity, novelty are fully evidenced in our living experience. Causal determinism is a working hypothesis, valuable for science. It is no more than that, a hypothesis. And a clear-sighted examination of the hypothesis shows that it does not entail the constrained determinism proclaimed by Laplace and docilely accepted by our scientists and philosophers without question.

Spinoza says, “God does not act from freedom of will.” Clearly, Spinoza means to clear God of caprice. But caprice is not to be equated with spontaneity. To be capricious is to be swayed by influences not under the control of the individual. A capricious act is not an instance of action in Spinoza’s sense of the term but of passion. A spontaneous, creative act is never irrational since it is always intrinsically coherent and consistent and consequently self-evident and fully intelligible, and this is rationality in the best sense.

The poet declares, “I do but sing because I must, / And pipe but as the linnet sings” (Tennyson, *In Memoriam*, XXI). Is this compulsion or freedom? Both of these notions are empty abstractions — better say, this is reality, this is the creativity of reality.

Quest of Reality

A soul, alive and vibrant, cannot be self-bound. It must be outgoing. If its reality is creative, as all reality is creativity, it must affirm its reality in sympathy, in concern for other, in creation of beauty, in *tokos en tōi kalōi*. Even God, Plato found, had to work out good things because, in his goodness, he wanted all things to be as like to himself as possible. I cannot agree with Nietzsche's denigration of pity, or with Spinoza's negative evaluation of pity. Pity is outflowing love craving to remedy imperfection. A self that remains self-bound or narrowly constrained must ossify. It can never know the joy of creation. Coleridge drew his words from the fount of divine wisdom:

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare:
A spring of love gushed from my heart,
And I blessed them unaware:
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I blessed them unaware.

As soon as he could behold beauty, he could pray; rather, as soon as his soul vibrated to beauty, *that* was his prayer, that was his communion with the All.

He prayeth well, who loveth well
Both man and bird and beast.

He prayeth best, who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all

The Rime of the Ancient Mariner, 282-7, 612-17.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

GOD

God may be identified with ultimate Reality or may be taken as one factor or dimension within that Reality, as Plato and Whitehead do. When God is identified with ultimate Reality, the question “What do we mean by God?” is equivalent to the question “What is the nature of ultimate Reality?” To this latter question there have been, as Whitehead points out (*Religion in the Making*, pp.68-69) three main answers: (1) the Eastern Asiatic concept of immanence; (2) the Semitic concept of transcendence; (3) the Pantheistic concept of monism. I find the concept of theistic transcendence metaphysically unacceptable. In my view the Asiatic immanence and the Pantheistic monism share the same fundamental ontological insight but differ in verbal expression and in emotional tone. Further, I agree with Kant (when he is consistent with his own transcendental critique) that we are not entitled to hold any of these views to be true of the actual world outside us. I agree with Wittgenstein that we

cannot speak of the All in which we dwell. Our view of fundamental Reality is a creation of our mind that gives wholeness and intelligibility to the experiential nebula in which we find ourselves thrown; it is a vision of our own creation that presents to us the only reality we know and that constitutes our own reality.

I do not have in my system a place for anything corresponding to Plato's God in the *Timaeus* or to Whitehead's God in chapter XI of *Science and the Modern World*. That is basically because Plato in the *Timaeus* and Whitehead (as is particularly evident in *Process and Reality*) are constructing cosmologies, a venture in which I have no interest. In my philosophical writings I try to avoid the term God because it is over-burdened with associations. Except in special contexts, as for instance when referring to theistic religions, when I do use the term it is equivalent to Spinoza's God or to my Creative Eternity.

Just as the concept of the soul was raised by philosophy from the primitive notion of the ghost that leaves the body and roams about during sleep and from the popular belief in spirits that hover around graveyards or populate Hades, to the sublime idea of the locus of the spiritual reality, so the concept of God was raised by philosophy from the notion of the ingenious and mighty maker of the world, or the gods that ruled the powers of nature, or that played with the destinies of humans and frolicked on Mount Olympus, to the sublime metaphysical vision of the primal origin and ground of Reality.

Belief in one god is not necessarily superior to belief in a multiplicity of gods. As long as the god or gods are exterior to the world they cannot be identical with ultimate Reality; they are a given particularity that calls for metaphysical justification. Judaism was not originally a monotheism but a monolatry. The Jews believed there were many gods, but one of those had struck a bargain with their forefathers, that they would worship no other

god, and he would guarantee their security and prosperity. Plato's god, the *dêmiourgos*, that formed the cosmos out of the original chaos, was not one with the ultimate Reality but was a persona of the cosmological tale of the *Timaeus*. For the ultimate Reality in Plato we have to go to the Form of the Good.

A god separate from the world, creating the world out of nothing, is an absurdity. It is unfortunate that modern Western thinkers, when they thought of God, were constrained by the predominance of the Judeo-Christian conception, which is silly, paltry, and flat. Surely the intriguing idea of a Reality encompassing and transcending the totality of actual, mutable existents deserved a better fortune. Had such brilliant and profound minds as that of Leibniz or Berkeley or Kant not been early exposed to the Judeo-Christian superstition, they would have given us rich visions of that Reality. I did not name Locke or Hume: these were subject to a different constraint. Locke was able to keep his religious faith and his theorizing about human understanding in separate compartments and Hume would tolerate the Christian God he did not believe in rather than admit the Spinozist God he could not fit into the boundaries of the Empiricist world as drawn by Bacon and Hobbes.

Theologians and religionists who create out of their traditional material their own imaginative metaphysical or mystical versions are unwittingly falsifying their sources. In philosophy too, every original philosopher falsifies the philosopher he purports to follow: Plato falsified Socrates, Aristotle in criticizing Plato actually corrupted Plato's positions, Plotinus falsified Plato in his own way, both Berkeley and Hume falsified Locke in different ways, and all the Germans falsified Kant. But all of these present their falsifications confessedly as their own work and openly say they are criticizing, correcting, improving, developing their source material. Not so theologians and religionists. Their sources being sacred they insist they are

presenting the original and true meaning of the tradition. There would be no harm in this if it were not that this leads their audience to remain attached to the tradition with all the error and muck contained in it, believing it to be true and of true worth. Thus while theologians often come up with very fine conceptions, the pity is that they always want us to take their conceptions to be in full harmony with whatever particular school of 'revelation' they adhere to and to acquiesce in all the chaff that their historical 'revelation' brought us. The sophisticated or refined new dress, in concealing, preserves and perpetuates the old sores. This happens with all religions — Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism.

Charles Gore, arguing that God's power "is over and in all things, yet He cannot do everything", adds in a footnote, "Etymologically, the Latin word *omnipotens*, and the Greek *pantokratôr*, mean 'powerful in or over all things,' not 'able to do anything'" (Charles Gore, *The Philosophy of the Good Life*, 1930, 1935, p.212.) This is an attempt to smooth out the monotheistic conception, the conception of the transcendent God. The point is not what the etymology of the Latin or the Greek word signifies but what the authors of the books of the Bible, old and new, thought. Further, Gore, in expounding that God "cannot do everything" says: "He cannot be unjust. He cannot deny himself." These, where admissible, are logical limitations. The ability or inability here does not worry the moral philosopher. But what about all the misery and suffering and evil in the world? Could God prevent these ills or could he not? If he could, he is culpable; if he could not, he is not omnipotent in any sense we may reasonably attach to the word.

Aristotle thought that reason demands that there be a first cause. But cause is a relative term. For there to be a cause there has to be something caused. What is simply there does not imply a cause. On the other hand, an uncaused cause may be cause of

other than itself but in relation to the uncaused the term cause is irrelevant. In fact, all of this is sheer rigmarole. Kant has the final say. The concept of cause is only relevant, can only operate, within the sphere of our phenomenal experience. To speak of the cause of the world is strictly nonsense. And yet venerable scientists are still dreaming of capturing the cause of the uncaused. Our philosophers have given it up in despair but have not fully realized the intrinsic absurdity of the quest.

I have no use for the term 'the Absolute' in the sense the term has for the German Idealists, and that for the same reason that I have reservations about Spinoza's metaphysics or Whitehead's cosmology: I do not think that philosophical understanding has anything to do with the world outside the human being. The philosopher's world is within the philosopher; that is the only reality a philosopher knows, all the reality a philosopher knows. When I read Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* when I was around twenty I was deeply impressed, just as I was impressed by Berkeley's Idealism, but now I see both Bradley's Absolute and Berkeley's God equally as profound myths, but just that, profound myths, or, as Plato would put it, as 'likely tales'. True, I speak of the All, but then I always mean the philosophical vision, and not any objective universe.

I am part of the All. I feel I am in communion with the All. But that is not knowledge. As far as knowledge is concerned, the All is my idea; God is my idea. I cannot know anything about the All. But I have a vision, a vision which is of my own creation, which gives me a quality of life, which gives me life of a spiritual quality. It gives my life value. That value is real. Is it true? That question is strictly irrelevant because I do not claim to have knowledge of the All and it is only in relation to objective knowledge that truth and falsehood have relevance. The oneness with God or with the Absolute that the mystics experience is the experience of the wholeness of the mystic's own reality.

A genuine mystic experience is a subjective experience. What the mystic knows immediately is her or his inner state of being. That is what she or he can testify to. All else is interpretation clothed in the language, in the concepts and the beliefs and the imagery of the mystic's inherited culture. That is why Hindu, Christian, Muslim mystics give widely differing interpretations of their experiences. In summing up the chapter on Mysticism in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, William James asserts the similarity of the experiences in delusional insanity to those of religious mysticism (pp.410-411). In summing up the conclusions of his extensive survey of the varieties of religious experience, he writes, "When we survey the whole field of religion, we find a great variety in the thoughts that have prevailed there; but the feelings on the one hand and the conduct on the other hand are almost always the same, for Stoic, Christian, and Buddhist saints are practically indistinguishable in their lives" (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, p.481).

Apologists of all religions tell us that their prophets were inspired. We do not have to contest that. Yet the inspiration, inwardly, is a subjective experience, and, outwardly, takes shape through a vessel that is itself already shaped, already stuffed. The gods that inspired them were already shaped in them and for them. A prophet offers me his god; if I find the god monstrous I do not judge the prophet a liar but a diseased mind.

In the final analysis, inspiration is communion with the All, and in that state it is really impossible, meaningless, to distinguish the inner from the outer, to distinguish receptivity from creativity — it is one living, creative, flowing current.

Plato says that poets compose their poetry under divine inspiration. Every poet, every original writer, knows that deliberation is only a minor factor in her or his work; what is best, what is most valuable, erupts spontaneously, with a will of

its own. To my mind, the simplest explanation for all that, is to say that the reality in which we are rooted is creative.

Plato's *Ion* is not properly an elenctic dialogue. Only in the last section does Socrates deflate Ion's pretension to expert knowledge. In the main part of the dialogue Plato develops the view of poetry as inspiration, as divine madness. In the *Meno* and in the *Phaedrus* the source of this transcendent wisdom is laid in a world beyond the here-and-now. But in the *Symposium* the ascent begins, proceeds, and is consummated in living experience, and in the *Republic* apprehension of the Form of the Good is attained through, or rather in, the dialectic process. It is when we ourselves become real, become like God, that we have, in the reality of our moral and intellectual integrity, that inspirational creativity out of which flows all genuine poetry, all genuine art, and all the heroic deeds, all the acts of love, in which we transcend the here-and-now. It is in the reality, the eternity, of true being within us that we have access to Reality. As the *Symposium* has it, "Remember how in that communion only, beholding beauty with that by which it can be beheld, he will be enabled to bring forth, not images of beauty, but realities (for he has hold not of an image but of a reality), and bringing forth and nourishing true virtue will properly become the friend of God and be immortal, if mortal man may. Would that be an ignoble life?" (211e-212a, tr. Jowett). Or as that prophetic passage in the *Republic* puts it, a true philosophical nature "grasps the essence of every reality by that in her soul to which it is becoming – namely, what is akin – to grasp that, approaching and mingling with what has true being, gives birth to reason and reality" (490a-b).

Whitehead speaks of "final truths perceived as exemplified in particular instances" (*Religion in the Making*, p.124). I call these creative insights, but this calls for some clarification. I say 'creative' because these 'truths', like all the forms, including

arithmetical numbers, are creations of the human mind, are not facts to be found anywhere in the outer, objective world. In this I agree with Plato and with Kant. The word 'insights' is somewhat tricky. I speak of philosophical vision as an imaginative creation, but still I call it insight because it gives us insight into our own reality, and I go further and say it gives us insight into all reality because we are embedded in the All; but it does not give us any particular knowledge about the world. Wittgenstein was right: we cannot make any valid statement about the World. Science may give us knowledge about things in the world; philosophy, like poetry, gives us imaginative visions of the World; but neither science nor philosophy can give us knowledge of the World. Scientists who speak of the origin of the universe or of the limits of the universe in doing so may have in their minds useful equations which they can put to good use in exploring distant nebulae and releasing energy from I know not what, but if they think the fictions in which they clothe those equations tell us anything about the World, they do not know what they are talking about and do not understand what they are saying.

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* William James surveys a wide expanse of specimens of religious experience. The common feature of the specimens is just what the title promises, they are varieties of states of inner experience, and in this sentence the word 'inner' is otiose, for experience is an inner state of feeling or it is nothing. The shape, the clothing, in which the experience is subsequently displayed is invariably drawn from the culture in which the individual concerned has been reared or to which she or he has been lately exposed. In the second of the two lectures devoted to the experience of conversion, James gives the following abridged quotation from an article by Professor James Henry Leuba (1867-1946) in the *American Journal of Psychology*, vii. 345-347, which I reproduce as given by James:

“When the sense of estrangement,” he writes, “fencing man about in a narrowly limited ego, breaks down, the individual finds himself ‘at one with all creation.’ He lives in the universal life; he and man, he and nature, he and God, are one. That state of confidence, trust, union with all things, following upon the achievement of moral unity, is the *Faith-state*. Various dogmatic beliefs suddenly, on the advent of the faith-state, acquire a character of certainty, assume a new reality, become an object of faith. As the ground of assurance here is not rational, argumentation is irrelevant. But such conviction being a mere casual off-shoot of the faith-state, it is a gross error to imagine that the chief practical value of the faith-state is its power to stamp with the seal of reality certain particular theological conceptions. On the contrary, its value lies solely in the fact that it is the psychic correlate of a biological growth reducing contending desires to one direction; a growth which expresses itself in new affective states and new reactions; in larger, nobler, more Christ-like activities. The ground of the specific assurance in religious dogmas is then an affective experience. The objects of faith may even be preposterous; the affective stream will float then along, and invest them with unshakable certitude. The more startling the affective experience, the less explicable it seems, the easier it is to make it the carrier of unsubstantiated notions.” (Quoted in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, pp.246-7.)

William James speaks of how a “genuine first-hand religious experience” turns into orthodoxy. The prophet appears at first “as a mere lonely madman”. When the prophet has attracted some followers, his doctrine “becomes a definite and labeled heresy. But if it still prove contagious enough to triumph over persecution it becomes itself an orthodoxy; and when a religion has become an orthodoxy, its day of inwardness is over: the

spring is dry; the faithful live at second hand exclusively and stone the prophets in their turn” (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, p.330). Perhaps the only major religion that has gone through all four stages in the life of its founder is Islam.

Alice Meynell in *Christ in the Universe* envisions a million manifestations of God across the universe, a million Christs:

But, in the eternities,
Doubtless we shall compare together, hear
A million alien Gospels, in what guise
He trod the Pleiades, the Lyre, the Bear.

O be prepared, my soul!
To read the inconceivable, to scan
The million forms of God those stars unroll
When, in our turn, we show to them a Man.

A wonderful vision: and why not? But it is a vision, not a factual report or prediction. That is what philosophers have to learn from poets. It is for philosophy to create visions to infuse meaning into a world that is otherwise, for us, dumb and meaningless. It is for science to discover actualities. And suppose that science some day came upon a concrete mighty God that demonstrates to our satisfaction that it was he who made the world. What would that be to us? It will not in any way affect our ideals and our values. We might find the God good and lovable and worthy of emulation: that will be according to our values. We might find him cruel and vicious: that too will be according to our values. The existence of such a God is neither here nor there for philosophy. But if the God we seek is not a particular existent but the whole and ultimate Reality, then the methods of empirical science have no way to it: and all pure reason can say is, We have the idea of the All, so the All is real for us, the All is all of reality

for us, so let us say, Yes, there is the All, we know that; but how or why, that we can never know; all we can is to spin fairy-tales to give us comfort and appease our puzzlement. The God of philosophy is not a God out there that we say has created us but a God within us that we have created, and in creating God we gain for ourselves integrity and reality. The only way to be ourselves real is to create our reality.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

TIME, DURATION, AND ETERNITY

The concepts of time, duration, and eternity are commonly confused and the distinction between the three is thought to be merely quantitative. The concept of immortality is also often confused with the concept of eternity. These I believe are serious errors and we badly need to distinguish these concepts carefully and clearly.

TIME

Time, which is commonly taken as the generic term covering all three or all four concepts, is the most ambiguous and most confounded. First, experienced time must be distinguished from the abstract concept of time. In fact, lived, experienced time should not, strictly, be taken as an instance of time but of duration. Abstract time is not a 'real' thing, is never an actuality that can be encountered objectively. It is a fiction, a useful

fiction, a fiction of vital importance for human thought and human activity. "An instant of time, without duration, is an imaginative logical construction" (Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p.82). The fiction performs varying functions in Homer's *Iliad*, in Thucydides' *Peloponnesian Wars*, in paleontological research, in the theory of evolution, in the calculations of Newton or of Einstein. In all of these areas we do not encounter actual time. In all of these areas the concept of time is a fiction that confers unity and coherence on a multiplicity of carcasses of expired processes or of observed or observable fleeting phenomena. Zeno of Elea was able to show the contradictoriness of the abstract concept of time. Newton and Leibniz could wrangle about time and each could show the other wrong because they were not speaking about the same thing. How could they when there was no actual thing to speak about? Each was upholding a different fiction that performed a different function in his system. And Kant was perfectly right when he affirmed that time is nothing but a form under which the human understanding presents the phenomenal content of our experience.

Hume writes, "Now as time is composed of parts that are not coexistent, an unchangeable object, since it produces none but coexistent impressions, produces none that can give us the idea of time, and, consequently, that idea must be derived from a succession of changeable objects, and time in its first appearance can never be severed from such a succession" (*Treatise*. I, II, III). But a succession cannot be an impression in Hume's sense of the term. If the succession is presented in experience as an integrated actuality, it is no longer an instance of Locke's perpetual perishing; it is no longer an exemplification of time but of duration. The idea of time can never be instanced as an actuality: the idea of time and the idea of succession are abstract creations of the mind that can never be given as actual existents. In living

experience, all becoming, all change, is durational. Whitehead rightly says, "There is no nature apart from transition, and there is no transition apart from temporal duration. This is the reason why the notion of an instant of time, conceived as a primary simple fact, is nonsense" (*Modes of Thought*, p.152).

Newton's "absolute mathematical time, flowing equably without regard to anything external" is a sheer abstraction, a fiction useful for a specific purpose, but it does not correspond to anything actual.

This is just a passing thought; I don't really want to delve into this; but here it is, for what it's worth: I don't think it's right to identify Kant's conception of time and space with Newton's. Newton's conception was naïve; he was not really concerned with the philosophical problem; for him time and space were objective givennesses within which he could elaborate his equations. Leibniz' view was certainly of greater philosophical profundity. Kant's conception transcended both Newton's and Leibniz'. This is another illustration of what I have been maintaining concerning the nature of philosophical thinking: in philosophy we do not deal with given particular objects that can be subjected to examination and statements about which can be labeled true or false; in philosophy we deal with realities or experiential totalities that can be presented, or rather molded, in various formulations, all of them both true and false, as all definite formulations must necessarily be.

I do not have the scientific background necessary for understanding the theory of relativity in its mathematical or physical contexts. And in view of my conviction that science and philosophy are radically different and should be kept completely separate, I am not concerned about this. But quite apart from the theory of relativity or any other scientific theory or notion, I have always held that time is a mere abstraction and space a mere abstraction. What is real is the totality of the experiential

presence, and I suppose that is what Whitehead means when he maintains that what is real is the event. While I see Whitehead as the profoundest of twentieth-century philosophers, and while I consider his philosophy of organism and of process as a most insightful contribution to philosophy, I do not need his intricate theory of prehensions to support my world view. Whitehead wanted to construct a rational cosmology; I am content to present an imaginative and purely ideal (= conceptual) universe of discourse. I believe that is the true function of philosophy proper.

If our consciousness consisted in a Humian succession of impressions then, as Whitehead maintained, communication by speech among humans would be an impossibility. No sentence can be uttered or apprehended if every sound unit emitted vanished in the past without presence in the present.

DURATION

Duration is not a span of time. A span of time is never an actual thing; it is an abstraction; and since it is a sheer conception, it is infinitely divisible. Duration is a real, living, integral, indivisible whole. We constantly live in duration, not in time. We live in duration; later on, when we think back of what we have 'lived', what we have lived through, we produce the concept of time to collect the vanished, fleeting succession of events into a fictional period of time and give the departed reality an illusory presence. The lived durational experience in recollection is represented as a span of temporal succession. We live in duration; our simplest gesture, our simplest utterance, is a whole in which the beginning and the end are present together. The gesture or the utterance is a live event; when I reflect on it in thought I turn it into a temporal stretch that can be divided in thought into an infinite succession of moments.

Whitehead pointed out that short-term memory always involves an integral whole. If it were not so we would not be able

to perceive a tune or a single note or a single word. The simplest voluntary act, when I put out my hand, hold the cup of coffee, raise it to my mouth and take a sip, that process is a willed whole, no part of it could be apart from the whole. The whole gives it its being as it gives it its meaning. On a higher level, a thought unfolds creatively in words, but the succession of words flows from the integral unity of the thought. The inspiration for a poem is a reality that is born in the poet's mind before she or he begins to put it into words. We are told that Mozart conceived a complete symphonic movement whole and entire in his mind before he set it down in notes. Einstein's space-time conception was only a novelty to scientists and philosophers who artificially lived with the separate abstractions of space and time, but no living person or living beast ever took a step in which space and time did not form one integral whole. But it was, I believe, Bergson who first gave the concept of duration its proper place in philosophical thinking and Whitehead made it the core of his mature philosophy when he saw an actual entity as an event and when he affirmed that reality cannot be separated from process.

Whitehead, the philosopher who best made use of the notions of duration and endurance in the twentieth century, says, "Bergson introduced into philosophy the organic conception of physiological science. He has most completely moved away from the static materialism of the seventeenth century. His protest against spatialisation is a protest against taking the Newtonian conception of nature as being anything except a high abstraction."

Bergson was born in the year Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published. He did not belong to the generation that received Darwin's work as a new revelation, but to the generation that began, or that should have begun, to rethink the hasty consequences that many drew from it. His thinking led him to three great insights crystallized in (1) the view that scientific

thinking, and all conceptual thinking, falsifies the realities of immediate experience; (2) the realization that the common or scientific concept of time is such a falsification and that an organic concept of duration is needed; (3) the realization that for an understanding of life and of evolution we have to think of a creative force behind the mechanisms described by objective science. It is a pity that while Whitehead agreed with Bergson in his opposition to abstractionism and in the emphasis he laid on the notion of duration, he did not make much of the idea of creativity which was fundamental in Bergson's outlook.

Heraclitus spoke of ceaseless change. Our experience confirms his testimony, but to think of that change in terms of an instant succeeding another instant or a moment replacing another moment falsifies our experience. The ceaseless change of natural things is a flow, a flux, a continuity, a unity, just as the ceaseless change of our thoughts is a stream in which instances have a supra-temporal presence and can only be seen as succeeding instances in the re-presentation of reflective thinking. All organic wholes proclaim, with Shelley's *Cloud*, "I change, but I cannot die".

When Whitehead speaks of "the life of an electron or of a man" he does not mean the word 'life' to be taken metaphorically for the electron; he intends it in exactly the same sense for the electron and for the man, since the whole of nature is an organism and every particle of it is living. Things in nature do not suffer the 'perpetual perishing' of Locke's Time; they have true duration in which the past lives in the present. In saying this I am not abandoning my resolve not to mix philosophy with science. I am only saying that we can only find nature intelligible when we see it as an organism.

Time as 'perpetual perishing' (Locke) is the Heraclitian flux. It is not an actual existent, and it is neither the abstract time of science nor the naïve notion of commonsense. It has no place in

and no room for Whitehead's microscopic notion of organism as "concerned with the formal constitution of an actual occasion, considered as a process of realizing an individual unity of experience", nor for his macroscopic notion of organism as "concerned with the givenness of the actual world" (*Process and Reality*, p.129). The living organism, microscopic or macroscopic, has its being in true duration. Whitehead beautifully shows the true nature of duration when he says that "in our experience, we essentially arise out of our bodies which are the stubborn facts of the immediate relevant past. We are also carried on by our immediate past of personal experience; we finish a sentence *because* we have begun it" (p.129). Duration and creativity are two aspects of the same reality. In reality there is no past and no future; there is only what Whitehead calls the immediate past and the immediate future united in present duration. Whitehead aptly sums up and vindicates the notion of duration when he says that "we have direct *intuition* of inheritance and memory" (p.167). But Whitehead, to my mind, does not give sufficient emphasis to creativity.

At no time, at no moment of time, is my body a single, fixed object. Yet I am one person, one mind. My reality is my personality, my mind, which at no time is an actual entity. My existent actuality is this ever changing, ever becoming, ever vanishing body. So what am I? I am this ceaseless activity, this flow which is one and is not one. I am no thing, yet I am not nothing. If the world truly had its being in Newtonian time, if Locke's perpetual perishing told the whole story, I would have no being. It is only because duration transcends the perpetual perishing that we can have being.

"A duration", as defined by Whitehead, "is a complete set of actual occasions, such that all the members are mutually contemporary one with the other. This property is expressed by the statement that the members enjoy 'unison in immediacy'"

(*Process and Reality*, p.322). I will not go into Whitehead's further theoretical elaborations. What I am concerned with is the notion of duration which reveals that we do not live – and nothing actual in the world has its being – in a succession of instances of time, but in an act, an activity, that transcends the temporal succession and in which becoming is creative genesis. The Heraclitian flux is not a vanishing but a fulfillment; the flux is not denied or negated but consummated in the Parmenidean oneness.

In Whitehead's philosophy process and organism are inseparable and duration is of the essence of process and of organism. Whitehead repeatedly emphasizes the durational character of our individuality or our identity. In *Modes of Thought*, having said that the "direct feeling of the derivation of emotion from the body is among our fundamental experiences", he goes on to affirm that "our immediate experience also claims derivation from another source, and equally claims a unity founded upon this alternative source of derivation. This second source is our own state of mind directly preceding the immediate present of our conscious experience. A quarter of a second ago, we were entertaining such and such ideas, we were enjoying such and such emotions, and we were making such and such observations of external fact. In our present state of mind, we are continuing that previous state. The word *continuing* states only half the truth. In one sense it is too weak, and in another sense it overstates. It is too weak, because we not only continue, but we claim absolute identity with our previous state. It was our very identical self in that state of mind, which is of course the basis of our present experience a quarter of a second later. In another sense the word *continuing* overstates. For we do not quite continue in our preceding state of experience. New elements have intervened" (p.160). I am and am not the 'I' that was a quarter of a second ago, because I am never a static actuality at a point of

time. I am not a thing, not even an entity, but an activity; the I that may be spoken of as an entity is an abstraction. I am not in process; I am process; I am creativity.

Whitehead's explication of the sense of personal identity by our memory of the immediate past exemplifies the idea of duration clearly. Whitehead gives his exposition of this notion in various places of his works. I quote the following from *Adventures of Ideas* (p.176-7) in full:

“In human experience, the most compelling example of non-sensuous perception is our knowledge of our immediate past. I am not referring to our memories of a day past, or of an hour past, or of a minute past. Such memories are blurred and confused by the intervening occasions of our personal existence. But our immediate past is constituted by that occasion, or by that group of fused occasions, which enters into experience devoid of any perceptible medium intervening between it and the present immediate fact. Roughly speaking, it is that portion of our past lying between a tenth of a second and half a second ago. It is gone, and yet it is here. It is our indubitable self, the foundation of our present existence. Yet the present occasion while claiming self-identity, while sharing the very nature of the bygone occasion in all its living activities, nevertheless is engaged in modifying it, in adjusting it to *other* influences, in completing it with *other* values, in deflecting it to *other* purposes. The present moment is constituted by the influx of *the other* into that self-identity which is the continued life of the immediate past within the immediacy of the present.”

Memory is the immanence of the past in the present; purpose is the immanence of the future in the present. These statements are not metaphorical. If the temporal succession of discrete moments were not merely a useful fiction but what the

world consisted of in fact, the 'present' would be an empty word corresponding to nothing and representing nothing. But my awareness of the immediately experienced present belies this fiction. I am aware of my being at the present moment as a totality, continuing my past, affirming the immediacy of my presence, and extending to the immediate issue of my intent. I am sipping my coffee: extending my arm, picking up the cup, putting it to my lips, sipping, swallowing, each one of these acts and these acts collectively are not a succession of separate impressions or separate moments but are an integrated purposive totality. These are dimensions of duration. The past moment breeds the present, the present requires the immediate future. When Wordsworth wrote (or uttered) "My heart leaps up" the words "when I behold" were already an embryo in "My heart leaps up", and when the words "when I behold" followed, the words "a rainbow in the sky" were already an embryo in the preceding words: the whole line, the whole little gem of a poem, was in gestation the moment the poet was surprised, actually or in thought, by the sight of the rainbow in the sky. This would be an impossibility in a world without duration, in a world constituted by a succession of Zenonian or Humian moments. "Each moment of experience", Whitehead says, "confesses itself to be a transition between two worlds, the immediate past and the immediate future" (*Adventures of Ideas*, p.187).

It is because Descartes had no proper conception of duration but only of mathematical time that, for the continuance of enduring things, he had to have recourse to successive re-creation by God. It is odd, at least I find it odd, that Whitehead thought that "the Cartesian conception of the human soul" agreed with his own "definition of a man" as a 'society', differing only "in the function assigned to God" (p.199).

ETERNITY

While the concept of duration has been ignored or neglected by philosophers, the concept of eternity has been misconceived and misused by them. Just as it is wrong to think of duration as a span of time, it is even a more serious error to think of eternity as an infinite stretch of time. Eternity so conceived is nothing but the combination of two fictions; neither time nor infinity can ever be an actuality. Both time and infinity are mere fictions, very useful fictions, but fictions nevertheless. Duration is the real on the plane of life; eternity is the real on the plane of creativity. In the *Phaedo*, Plato in arguing for the immortality of the soul gives us, in what has been termed the affinity argument, the liveliest idea of the eternity of the soul. There Plato affirms the affinity of the soul to the divine, or in other words, affirms the divinity of the soul. The soul when wise and good is divine. It is then supra-temporal, and that supra-temporality is eternity in the only meaningful, intelligible sense of eternity we can have. We live above time in every creative act, in every deed in which the good will affirms its goodness and its reality. We live eternity ephemerally in creative acts and in deeds of love. That is to live *sub specie aeternitatis*, if I may borrow Spinoza's favorite phrase.

Spinoza's eternity is an everlasting state of being; Whitehead's eternal objects are timeless or supra-temporal forms. All of these are different from what I mean by eternity. For me eternity is a plane of being realized in the evanescence of creative activity or the creative act. Or we may say that eternity is reality understood as the transcendence of all becoming, the transcendence in which transient existence obtains reality. Of course all linguistic formulations, all determinate thought formulations, must necessarily fail to give adequate expression to reality. What must be kept in mind is that ultimately Reality is

the Act: Reality is not an existent, not an entity, not a state of being, but is creativity and this creativity is in eternity. It is only with much hesitation that I say that ultimate reality is creative intelligence because I do not want 'intelligence' to be taken for something that is there, but I use this expression to emphasize that intelligence must be an original dimension of ultimate reality; it would be better to say that ultimate reality is intelligent creativity. All of this is implied in the affirmation that Reality is Creative Eternity. Had not Spinoza been constrained by his lifeless Cartesian rationalism, had he been able to combine his Parmenidean One with the consuming Fire of Heraclitus, he could have found his way to Plato's Eros and his *tokos en kalôi*.

We all at one time or another experience the eternity I speak of here, at moments when our soul goes out in an act of love, in an act of creativity, when, "surprised with joy", we are one with the All. Rosalind Murray, having given up the search for an objective answer to the question "what is beauty" asks instead "in what does aesthetic experience consist?" She finds that "it is in some form a perception of the quality-of-eternity in relation to, in contrast to, the things of time; a relation of the individual to the universe, a momentary escape from time and place that is in some inexpressible way dependent on an intensified perception of the actual things of time and place" (*The Forsaken Fountain*, 1948).

The eternity I speak of is not an everlastingness in time. The reality I believe in is not above or beyond the phenomenal flux. For me, eternity is the fleeing, vanishing eternity of the creative act. For a finite human being, in the eternity of the creative act, life is inseparably wedded to death. At the moment of conception the embryo begins to die. The flower withers as it blooms. A musical note to sound must cease.

The concept of eternity has been curiously confounded with the notion of immortality. Immortality as the idea of personal survival is an ambiguous and confused idea. We speak of

personal survival, but what is a person?, where is *the* person? The concept of the person is a fiction to sum up the multiple aspects and stages of an individual life. The person changes not only day by day, but even moment by moment. Which of these persons is to survive? And if what is to survive is only the original matrix of the person, the soul before it has received any particular impressions or been molded by any particular experiences, then that can only mean the merging of our individual being in general being, a survival of what we come from in what we return to, a survival which Lucretius would have no cause to contend with.

Eternity, seed divine, beyond time and beyond existence you are. You never were but ever are, for Time cannot envelop you. Ever germinating: you breed Time and Existence.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THREE METAPHYSICAL PRINCIPLES

I do not understand metaphysics as the study of Being pure and simple. Absolutely simple Being can produce nothing, can issue in nothing. I think that Plato's happiest metaphysical idea, apart from the majestic Form of the Good, was the notion of *tokos en kalôi*, birth or rather procreation in beauty. In the *Sophist* he finds the defining character of reality to be *dunamis* which we may render as activity. In my first wrestlings with metaphysical thinking as a boy I somehow reached the conclusion that ultimate Reality must be Will and as Will is necessarily purposive it is one with Love.

We stand face to face with the ultimate mystery of Being, with the ultimate IS. But we do not ever anywhere encounter static being or simple being. We come into life to find ourselves thrown into a tumultuous sea of never ceasing change. And despite all our learned

chatter and clatter about causes and causation we do not in truth know what makes anything change into something else. The real causation I know is when I do something or better still when I create something. I want a sip of coffee and my arm moves to the cup and brings it to my lips. I am thinking about the metaphysics of being and my thoughts flow in statements that my fingers turn into printed words on my laptop. To my mind that is not only the only causation I know but also the only reality I know. All else is fleeting shadow.

This is the model of ultimate Reality that I find intelligible: a creative intelligence or intelligent creativity. Ultimate Reality is a Shakespeare ever creating new worlds that have their fleeting being, their only reality, in the act of creation. If we say, as I erstwhile did, that God is a Shakespeare ever creating new worlds, we should be careful not to understand by 'God' a person, but simply and purely the Creativity; hence I have also said: the ultimate Reality is the Act.

THE PRINCIPLE OF TRANSIENCE

To exist is to be a determinate actuality. A determinate actuality is limited by what it is not; it is fraught with negation. In itself it is in process of change, and the what-it-is-not that determines its nature is also in process of change and thus necessarily involves it in change. Every existent is finite, imperfect, transient. This is true not only of 'natural things'; it is also true of all institutions, all arrangements, all laws, all relationships. Institutions in the process of functioning, laws in the process of application, are modified and change, and the circumstances, the environment, that originally gave rise to them and which are determinative of their character and nature also change and in changing change the character of the institutions and the laws. A poet has an inspiration, an urge to create; in its incipient state it is indefinite, nebulous; it breeds a determinate expression; the words forming the new expression, being ingredients in an original whole, assume new hues of meaning.

In the Socratic elenctic every idea is shown to be riddled with contradiction. In the *Parmenides* Being is seen to imply non-being and the One is seen to be heavy with the Many. From Plato we learn that not one thing ever is a This or a What but we may at best say it is a fleeting Such.

Heraclitus saw beyond the deceptive stability and permanence of things. He said that all things are in flux. The sun today is not the same sun that was yesterday. All things are in constant evanescence. We go out all over the world looking for a thing that has being and everywhere we find only becoming. Becoming is all that we indubitably know is there.

Sartre's dictum "existence precedes essence" is fatuous. Absolutely formless existence, existence apart from all essence, is a sheer abstraction. Any actual existent must have some character; every This must exist as a determinate What; every What must exist as a particular This. Plato's *hypodochê*, the womb and nurse of becoming, has no character; it is no This, it is no What, in itself it is nothing.

"Evil, triumphant in its enjoyment, is so far good in itself; but beyond itself it is evil in its character of a destructive agent among things greater than itself. In the summation of the more complete fact it has secured a descent towards nothingness, in contrast to the creativeness of what can without qualification be termed good. Evil is positive and destructive; what is good is positive and creative" (A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, pp.95-6). Evil is in the nature of things; evil is necessarily involved in the negativity and limitedness of finite existence. Evil is neither an illusion as Leibniz would have us believe, nor is it an ultimate principle, an ultimate dimension of Reality, but it is an inseparable accompaniment of finite, determinate existence, as Buddha realized. Yet we can also say with Whitehead that "evil promotes its own elimination by destruction, or degradation, or by elevation" (p.96).

Transience is inseparable from the originaive aspect of becoming. Transience is not sheer negation. Whitehead,

drawing attention to “our derivation from our immediate past of a quarter of a second ago”, says, “We are continuous with it, we are the same as it, prolonging its effective tone, enjoying its data.” Further on he says, “We reduce this past to a perspective, and yet retain our individual identity with it. This is the mystery of personal identity, the mystery of the immanence of the past in the present, the mystery of transience” (*Adventures of Ideas*, p.159). This “immanence of the past in the present” is the secret of all becoming, but we are only immediately aware of it in our subjective experience. We are all the time the same and not the same; we are vanishing and we are persisting. This is transience and creative becoming in one. Neither of these can be understood apart from the other.

All becoming involves particularization, all particularization is determination, all determination is exclusion, all exclusion is negation. Becoming issues in the existent. The existent is thus inherently drenched in negation. Its imperfection demands completion. Its urge for completion brings about its destruction. We see this exemplified in all nature, in all of human life, in the whole of history. The evil perpetrated by humans comes replete with the seeds of corruption. But also the good done by humans comes with the requirement for dissolution worked into the very terms of its constitution. This is the tragedy of life. The moment the male sperm invades the female ovum it sets off the process of generation together with the process of degeneration; the new creature begins to grow and also begins to age; the journey of life and the journey of death are one.

Worlds on worlds are rolling ever
From creation to decay,
Like the bubbles on a river,
Sparkling, bursting, borne away.

Shelley, “Hellas”

THE PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRITY

We only understand a thing when we see it as an integral whole or when we see it within an integral whole. In more common parlance, when we see it in context. That is why Plato insists that to philosophize is to see the one in the many and to see the many in one. He says in the *Republic*, “He who sees things as a whole is philosophical, he who doesn’t, isn’t” (537c). And if, with Parmenides, we identify the real with the intelligible, we must say that only what is whole is real.

In the *Timaeus* Plato makes God create the world as a living animal. That is profound metaphysical insight. The world is only intelligible as one, whole, living organism. Except that there is no God creating the world. The divinity Itself is that whole, living, self-creating Being. It is Spinoza’s one Substance, except that Spinoza’s *Deus sive Natura* is not alive enough, being crippled by Spinoza’s Cartesian deterministic rationalism. It would be Whitehead’s cosmos, except that Whitehead overemphasizes pluralism at the cost of the wholeness and integrity of Reality. To me, Reality is only intelligible as an intelligent, living, creative Whole, whose reality is Its creativity: Creative Eternity is also Creative Intelligence.

All art is a realization of wholeness. All beauty is multiplicity in unity, an exemplification of wholeness. All harmony is multiplicity in unity, wholeness. In *Let Us Philosophize* I interpreted Wordsworth’s statement that poetry “takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquility” as meaning that in poetry “the tumult and chaotic multiplicity of immediate experience” is “made whole in the integrity of intelligence” (Book Two, Chapter 2, 15). I find this same insight in Whitehead’s words: “All aesthetic experience is feeling arising out of the realization of contrast under identity” (*Process and Reality*, p.280).

Whitehead speaks of “the mystery of the human soul in its journey toward the source of all harmony”. This is the journey depicted in the *Symposium* as an ascent to the Form of Beauty and in the *Republic* as a journey toward the Form of the Good. This yearning for wholeness, a yearning that renders us whole, a wholeness whose essence is this yearning itself — the aspiration of the philosophical nature to what IS that Plato speaks of in *Republic* 490a-b.

W. B. Yeats embodies the insight into the principle of Wholeness in this stanza:

Oh, Chestnut tree, great-rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?

William Butler Yeats,
Among School Children.

The metaphysical polarity of the one and the many can be seen exemplified in all spheres and on all planes of being. It can be seen exemplified in a painting, in a symphony, in an epic, in a lyric, and it can be seen in the interdependence of the individual and the community, be it a family, a tribe, a state, an association, a club. The individual’s freedom is simultaneously limited and deepened and extended in the community, and the community has its being realized, actualized, and determined in and through and by the individuals. This is the principle of all organization, of all organic unity — the example closest to us and hence liable to be forgotten is the human body and, on a higher plane, the human person which is a Whole of multiple drives, needs, interests, beliefs, aspirations, sympathies, antipathies. A drama or a novel not only exemplifies the one and many polarity in its structure as a work of art but also displays it in its subject matter.

Being is wholeness. To be is to be whole. Integrity is the first principle of human worth. Socrates, to me, is the paragon of human excellence because in him moral integrity was united with intellectual integrity.

But we, individual human beings, are parts, fragments, of the world. To realize our humanity we have to be integrated internally and also integrated with the whole that encompasses us; rather, integrated with each and every one of the multiple wholes that encompass us. Thus we are constantly involved in a dialectic tug of war between our internal being and our external ground. The individual has constantly to adapt her or his internal integrity to the necessary integration with an external milieu — family, community, society, country, the physical world at large. The adaptation can never be accomplished once and for all. When the adaptation settles through a stretch of time, the individual, to the measure that the adaptation remains settled, is a lifeless part in an external whole. The tension, the Heraclitian attunement, is what keeps us alive, is life. Between the individual and society (tribe, community, state, etc.), when the dialectic is not operative, when the rhythmic adaptation is halted, we have slavery on the one hand and anarchy on the other hand. In a family where the parents do not give the dialectic scope, the children turn out either social misfits or soulless, servile units. Even in friendship or in a love affair the absence of dialectic corrupts the relation.

Under the rubric ‘Immanence’ Whitehead writes:

“This is at once the doctrine of the unity of nature, and of the unity of each human life. The conclusion follows that our consciousness of the self-identity pervading our life-thread of occasions is nothing other than knowledge of a special strand of unity within the general unity of nature. It is a locus within the whole, marked out by its own peculiarities, but otherwise exhibiting the general principle which guides the

constitution of the whole. ... it can be conceived as the doctrine of the immanence of the past energizing in the present" (*Adventures of Ideas*, p.183).

Truth, Beauty, and Goodness have traditionally been held as the three prime ideals for humanity. All three are forms of wholeness, of integrity; forms of wholeness capable of realization in human experience: Truth as self-evidence, Beauty as that where the content is self-sufficient, and Goodness as that where the end is contained in the act. If we add Love, Love is itself an integrative principle that makes whole what is not whole, that makes one what is not one.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CREATIVITY

All we know of Being is the vanishing presence of Becoming. And the only intelligible becoming we know is the creative becoming of our intelligent activity. Becoming in itself and by itself is utterly unintelligible: how what is itself, taken abstractly and simply as what is itself, becomes other than itself, is unintelligible. Only intelligent creativity is intelligible becoming.

Being is the ultimate mystery that does not permit us even to raise any question about its origin. The earliest cosmogonies seek no more than to give an intelligible, a thinkable, account of the shaping of the world as we find it, as it is presented to us in our experience. The egg out of which it was hatched, the chaos out of which it was formed, was simply there, all we can say of it is what Parmenides says of the One: *esti*, IT IS. Our learned astrophysicists and our erudite philosophers are not in a better position than the ancient cosmogonists were: they have to accept a mysterious something that was, is, and will be; something that to bang, to develop, to burst, to whatever, had to be there in the first place. Our learned scientists and philosophers fool themselves by asking the wrong question and thinking

themselves giving or seeking an explanation of why the world has come to be.

The earliest creation myths are in no better position. The ancient Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Indians, equally with the Ionian thinkers, accepted the primordial IS and tried to explain how it came to be shaped into the world as we know it. A god outside the world creating the world out of nothing only turns the mystery into an absurdity; for besides having to accept the unexplained being of that first Being we are required to accept the unnecessary and strictly unthinkable idea of something coming out of nothing. What for?, since our pristine mysterious Being has its being to shape into all shapes, as my mind is shaping these thoughts out of — out of what? Not out of an unthinkable nothing, but out of its own reality.

Being then is the ultimate mystery and the ultimate irrationality we have to submit to since even God will not extricate us out of that quandary. But why Being is not simply being but has taken shape and continues to pass from shape to shape, that is a riddle that we have to wrestle with. If Being is the ultimate mystery that refuses to submit to questioning, Becoming is the womb that gives birth to all questions.

The early cosmogonies gave imaginative descriptions of how the world came to be as we know it. The Ionian physicists also gave such imaginative accounts of how things came about, but the imaginative accounts of the Ionian thinkers, in addition to being thinkable (that is a necessary condition for giving the comfortable sense of ‘understanding’) were reasoned. This is the case with those thinkers who speculated *peri phuseôs*, from Thales to Anaxagoras and beyond him to the Atomists down to Lucretius, including even Empedocles’ alternations between the sway of Love and the dominance of Hate. All of these accounts gave specific descriptions of coming to be.

With Plato's account in the *Phaedo* of the advance and retirement of Forms (102a-107b) we move onto a new plane, since here, instead of a specific description, we have a universal formula giving intelligibility to the processes of becoming. Aristotle's doctrine of the 'four causes' is only a more sophisticated example of this. Hegel's synthesis of thesis and antithesis is in the same class. In all of this, from the primitive cosmogonies through the Ionian reasoned accounts to the formulas of Plato and Hegel, we have intelligible 'explanations' that may give us an answer to the How question but not to the Why question. This is the profound insight that Socrates reveals in the 'autobiographical' passage of the *Phaedo* (95a-102a). All the *aitiai* (causes) proclaimed by the cosmologists, the physicists, and even the philosophers in their 'objective' accounts may satisfy our itch for knowing how things come to be, but do not give us insight into why they come to be. Despite all the explanations of scientists and philosophers, all becoming remains a mystery and a riddle. Only the purposive act of the free will gives us that inward understanding that Socrates would accept for a true *aitia* (here 'reason' rather than 'cause'). And the purposive act is an act of love and the act of love is a creative act.

On the whole, philosophers no less than scientists, have failed to solve the riddle of becoming, of change, of one thing turning into another thing, of one thing breeding another thing different from it, of a new, original thing coming into being, because all the time they were looking in the wrong place. Only Socrates looked in the right place. He looked within himself and saw that he remained in his prison to face death *because* he *willed* to be true to his ideals. Philosophers have failed to find true *aitiai* because these were so close while they were canvassing the wide world searching for them. They travelled far and wide searching for *aitiai* while they could have easily found them in every voluntary act of ours. The simplest sentence we utter is an act of

creativity, no less than a sonnet of Keats, a sonata of Beethoven, or a novel by George Eliot.

Not only is every newly budding flower an original creation, but every time one person sees that flower, we have a creative act, a unique creation.

He will watch from dawn to gloom
The lake-reflected sun illumine
The yellow bees in the ivy-bloom,
Nor heed nor see what things they be;
But from these create he can
Forms more real than living man,
Nurslings of immortality.

Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, I, 743-9.

The ‘discovery’ of Non-Euclidean geometries – which properly should be described not as ‘discovery’ but as creation – should have opened our eyes to the true nature of thinking in general and of philosophical thinking in particular: all thinking is creative and all understanding is creative interpretation.

Kant says, “Everything in nature works in accordance with laws” (*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, AK 4:412). But strictly, in accordance with Kant’s own transcendental philosophy – his Copernican revolution – we have no justification for saying this. We should rather say that we can only understand things in nature by subjecting them to laws generated by our mind. In nature there may be a measure of observable regularity. If there were absolute regularity there could be no development; there would be no evolution and no history. Strict regularity, strict conformity to law in nature, is a useful fiction for practical purposes, including the purposes of ‘exact’ science; but it is a fiction that has done and continues to do grave harm in the field of philosophy.

Kant begins Section III of the *Groundwork* by saying: “Will is a kind of causality of living beings insofar as they are rational and *freedom* would be that property of such causality that can be efficient independently of alien causes *determining* it,”— thus far this is only Spinoza’s notion of freedom as autonomy (or action as opposed to passion); but then Kant continues, “just as *natural necessity* is the property of the causality of all nonrational beings to be determined to activity by the influence of alien causes” (AK 4:446). Here we have to give thought, for these two apparently parallel types of causality are actually quite different. The causality of the free or autonomous will is real and indeed is the only reality we know immediately and certainly. Natural causality, on the other hand, is, in the language of Kant’s transcendental system, a concept of the understanding applicable only to the phenomenal world, and the necessity ascribed to it is a useful fiction that works well for our practical and scientific purposes, but cannot claim absolute validity and cannot extend its jurisdiction beyond its proper sphere and is not applicable to the noumenal.

As Diotima teaches Socrates in the *Symposium*, if love of good is of the essence of reality, then the end of love will be giving birth in beauty. Reality must be creative, creativity is reality. In the *Sophist* Plato says that reality is simply *dunamis* (power, activity): if that *dunamis* is not blind but intelligent and purposive, then it will be love and will be realized in giving birth in beauty. The same insight is expressed in Plato’s assertion that the Good breeds *epistêmê* (knowledge) and *ousia* (being, reality). I will not apologize for harping on this idea again and again, because it is an insight that the whole setup of contemporary philosophy, especially in the English-speaking world, makes it very difficult for the modern mind to absorb.

Whitehead speaks of the “state of imaginative muddled suspense which precedes successful inductive generalisations”

(*Science and the Modern World*, p.18). This is the creativity of scientific thinking. It is of the selfsame nature as the creativity of poetic thinking. The ‘generalisations’ of science, no more than Coleridge’s “caverns measureless to man”, are not found in the content of the ‘muddled suspense’; they are creations of the mind, exuded by the mind to ease the itch induced by the muddle, just as the ancients created cosmogonies and generated gods and dreams to ease the itch of perplexity at the puzzles of natural occurrences.

When Whitehead says, “The science of Pure Mathematics, in its modern developments, may claim to be the most original creation of the human spirit” (*Science and the Modern World*, p.32), he is not speaking metaphorically. Mathematics is, strictly speaking, a creation in a double sense: First, the forms and concepts of mathematics are not found in nature. When we say that the forms of mathematics are exemplified in nature we simply mean that applying the forms of mathematics to nature renders the phenomena of nature intelligible to us. Secondly, the forms and concepts of mathematics are a creation of the mind, engendered in and by the mind and have no being anywhere but in the mind. In *Modes of Thought* Whitehead writes, “If we say that ‘twice-three is six,’ we are saying that the issue of a process is an entity with the character ‘six.’ If we are saying that ‘twice-three is equal to the sum of two and four,’ we are saying that two distinct processes issue in compositions with the same numerical character. ... mathematics is concerned with certain forms of process issuing into forms which are components of further process” (p.92).

There is no static actuality in the world ever. Both Being and Becoming are abstractions. In the words of Whitehead, “Every actual occasion exhibits itself as a process: it is a becomingness” (p.205). The real is the activity; the ultimately real is the Act. And this activity, which is the essence of reality, is not subject to

any extraneous determination, not subject to any law. It is its own law, as, in Milton's words, the mind is its own place. That the Act is its own law means that it is creative; it is pure creativity. The Act is Creative Eternity. (In the sentence I quoted from Whitehead he was speaking of a single, particular occasion, but the principle applies to the actuality of all actualities, that is, the All.) Whitehead says that the occasion "may be conditioned, and even completely determined by the past from which it issues". I disagree. Every 'occasion' is conditioned by its past but no 'occasion' is determined by its past. There is no reality without creativity. Without the principle of creativity we would, at the utmost, have eternal recurrence.

Spinoza expects definite ascertainable affections to follow from the nature of a proud man "with the same necessity as it does from the nature of a triangle that its three angles are equal to two right angles" (Part IV, Prop. LVII, Note). Spinoza does not take into account that a triangle is an abstracted creation of our mind, which we bring into being together with all the necessities of its nature. But our affections are an original outcome of the creativity of our nature. This is the harm that mathematics did to Spinoza and almost did to Plato, and that Leibniz only partly escaped because he was prepared to be inconsistent.

It is not the laws and the forms that are above time and above space as Emerson, Santayana, and Whitehead say following Plato. Rather, it is the creative act that is eternal and lends supra-temporality to the laws and the forms.

Spinoza's *causa sui* cannot be a one-time act or a static actuality, else it would be dead; it must be perpetually creative, it can be nothing other than perpetual creativity.

Every sentence uttered is an incarnate lie. It is not true to say that we often struggle to find words to express our ideas. If we have ideas to express they must be already embodied in words. What we have when we are struggling to find words may be a feeling, a

sensation, an image, a presentiment; when once the sentence is formed, we have already transformed that into something not only different but of a different nature altogether, we have creatively transmuted the living experience into a conceptual representation. Mary Gregor in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* translates Kant's "*in mancher Absicht*" as "for many purposes" and then says in a footnote "perhaps 'in many respects'." Did Kant mean this or that? Kant meant neither this nor that. He had in his mind a fecund whole, heavy with all the resonances, associations, and ambiguities of the German words, resonances, associations, and ambiguities that can never be reproduced exactly in any other language. To remove the ambiguity is to falsify the original, and the poor translator must go through the torment of choosing between this falsification and that.

I have written somewhere that intelligent reading, engendering understanding, is necessarily creative. A reader, reading the plainest text, does not read what the writer had in her or his mind when writing. A reader reads what the text comes to mean when received in the community of the reader's total mental state, including her or his present physical and psychic condition.

In the chapter "The Order of Nature" (Part II, Chapter III) of *Process and Reality* Whitehead presents a highly abstruse system of concepts, constituting the theory of the processes of nature in the framework of his cosmology. I think Section IX of that chapter shows clearly that we have need for the principle of creativity as a dimension of ultimate Reality. I extract the following excerpts from three successive paragraphs in that Section:

"The problem to be solved is that of a certain originality in the response of a cell to external stimulus. The theory of an enduring entity with its inherited mentality gives us a reason why this mentality should be swayed by its own past. We

ask for something original at the moment, and we are provided with a reason for limiting originality. Life is a bid for freedom: an enduring entity binds any one of its occasions to the line of its ancestry. The doctrine of the enduring soul with its permanent characteristics is exactly the irrelevant answer to the problem which life presents. That problem is, How can there be originality? And the answer explains how the soul need be no more original than a stone.

“The theory of a corpuscular society, made up of many enduring entities, fits the evidence no better. The same objections apply. The root fact is that ‘endurance’ is a device whereby an occasion is peculiarly bound by a single line of physical ancestry, while ‘life’ means novelty ... What has to be explained is originality of response to stimulus. This amounts to the doctrine that an organism is ‘alive’ when in some measure its reactions are inexplicable by *any* tradition of pure physical inheritance.

“Explanation by ‘tradition’ is merely another phraseology for explanation by ‘efficient cause.’ We require explanation by ‘final cause.’ ...” (p.104).

My excuse for making this extensive quotation is that it states the problem better than I could do. Whitehead elsewhere says that “nature is never complete. It is always passing beyond itself. This is the creative advance of nature” (p.289). I find no answer to the problem but the one I have been giving in all my writings. (See particularly *Let Us Philosophize*, Book Two, *passim*, and “Free Will as Creativity” in *The Sphinx and the Phoenix*.) The answer is: All becoming is creative; all reality is creative intelligence; ultimate Reality is Creative Eternity.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CREATIVE ETERNITY

Being is the ultimate mystery before which we stand in speechless acquiescence. But sheer Being is barren. Indeed, absolutely formless, absolutely unqualified Being is utterly unthinkable. It is not even equivalent to Nothing, because we can think of Nothing as relative nothingness, but sheer Being is an absolute blank, indistinguishable from utter Nothingness, which Plato in the *Sophist* declared to be totally unthinkable.

The ultimate origin and source of all things cannot be thought of as simple Being. The ultimate source and origin of things must have it in its nature to mutate, to move, to spawn variegated progeny. It is in vain that we ask, How?, Why? For this too is a mystery that will forever remain a mystery, but it is thinkable, it is imaginable. It is thinkable and imaginable because we have the model of it in the immediacy of our awareness of our inner reality.

The Indian sages saw that Brahma's absolute Being cannot explain the world we live in; though this world be nothing but illusory Maya, yet it proclaims itself to be the progeny of the Absolute and dares the Absolute to disown it. The Indian sages thus envisioned the One as three-in-one, a triad, Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva — the Creator, the Preserver, the Destroyer. The Indian Trimurti, like the Christian Trinity, was a happy metaphysical idea. In my first book, *Let Us Philosophize*, I insisted that, for becoming to be intelligible, for the actual world to be intelligible, we have to conceive of ultimate Reality as multi-dimensional.

All around us in the phenomenal world we encounter things that now are this, then are that. We say they change, we say they become what they were not, we say one thing brings forth another. But Hume told us that all we can justifiably say is that one state of being is succeeded by another state of being. The testimony of our immediate experience – in Humian terms – does not entitle us to speak of change or becoming, let alone causation. The ideas of change, becoming, causation, are forms cast by our mind on the deliverances of our experience to give them intelligibility.

In the end it is our internal, immediate awareness of our own movements and our own doings that is the model and the vindication of our notions of all forms of becoming. And my internal, immediate awareness of my movements and my doings does not give me evidence of myself or of anything within me 'causing' another thing. My immediate internal experience testifies to creativity. I am writing these sentences; my mind brings them forth from nowhere but from within itself. My mind is not working on any material foreign to itself. My model – and it is that and nothing but that – for a Reality that can bring forth and originate things is this creativity that I know in myself.

The causation that I exercise and experience when I work on foreign material, when I make a table or build a house, I find of no metaphysical significance, though it was traditionally the model after which a transcendent God producing the world out of nothing was fashioned. The only way I can find becoming, any becoming, intelligible, is by thinking of it as creativity.

As I said in *Let Us Philosophize* (Bk, II, Ch. 3, 6) we do not know any instance of one single thing causing another thing. We always have a complex circumstance consisting of multiple elements issuing in a new, original, complex circumstance. How? When the process is outside us, we can observe it, we can describe it, but we can never find an explanation for it. But when the process is within our conscious being, we are aware of an instance of creativity.

I envision what is ultimately there, what was ultimately there in the beginning that is not a beginning but the *archê* (principle) of all beginning, not as a thing that is and not as a thing that becomes but as the becoming that is itself all that there is. The becoming has content; it is this issuing into that, this bringing forth that. Neither the this that becomes what it is not nor the that that comes from what it is not is the real. Wordsworth exuberates, utters, "My heart leaps up." The exuberance is not a thing in itself but exists; the utterance is not a thing in itself, but exists. Neither the one nor the other is the real; the real is the soul (mind) that out of the exuberance created the utterance. But this real soul (mind) is nowhere; it is not a thing that is; it is not the creator of the utterance; it is the creativity that is the exuberance become an utterance.

Ultimately what is, is the activity, the creativity; and I find that creativity multi-dimensional. Two dimensions that I find in all that is are: reality and existence. The existent is the

actual, and the existent is in incessant becoming. It becomes what it is not. It cannot be in itself. It only has being in and for the intelligence that lends it reality by giving it form, by clothing it in an intelligible form. The form in a sense is the real. This is the Platonic *eidos*, the Platonic *ousia*. But the existent and the form have their being in the intelligence that creates the form and lends reality to the evanescent existent. And the intelligence that creates is not a thing that is but is the act of creation, is simply creativity. I designate ultimate Reality as creative intelligence. But this designation can be misleading. Ultimate Reality is not an intelligence that is and creates; it is the act of intelligent creativity. Creativity involves temporality and the reality that subsumes the creativity must be supra-temporal. Hence I designate ultimate Reality as Creative Eternity. I also call Reality the Act.

Parmenides insisted that the real must be one, whole, free of all change, free of any finitude or qualification. But from such a simple One our world of change and imperfection and particularity could not have come. Heraclitus had declared that in our actual world there is no permanence or stability or perfection. The perfect One of Parmenides cannot yield this actual world, and the actual world with its fleeting, insubstantial unrealities cannot satisfy our yearning for intelligibility. Heraclitus himself spoke of a *Logos* that puts sense in the senseless tumult of our world, and Parmenides had to append to his Way of Truth a Way of Seeming giving an account of the fickle appearances of our world. Somebody had to put these together to make each remedy the defect of the other. Plato found that the shadowlike things of the world obtain meaning and reality from the Forms generated by the mind and further found that these meaning-giving and reality-giving Forms unite in the Form of the Good which, being the source of being and intelligence, is yet beyond being and

intelligence. Of this Form of the Good we can only speak in parable and simile and myth. The vision embodied in the notion of Creative Eternity is my myth for this Reality we perforce aspire to but can never comprehend. And I find the model of this Reality within me when I spontaneously extend a helping hand to a helpless creature, or when, seeing a thing of beauty, I breathe a benediction.

Creative Eternity is, like Plato's Form of the Good, beyond being and beyond intelligence. To enjoy being and intelligence It engenders transient existents that have their reality in intelligible Forms. A poet's reality is not her or his body or her or his fleeting affections; a poet's reality is her or his personality (soul, mind, intelligence). A poet's personality is never an actuality. A poet has actuality only in her or his ephemeral creations. The poet's actuality, realized in her or his creations, like the actuality of her or his corporeal being, is immersed in the imperfection and corruptibility of all finite existence. The poet's reality is the ever-burning flame of her or his intelligent creativity. And the reality of Creative Eternity is beyond being but is ever actualized in the creation of evanescent creations.

Life is a reality. It is actualized in a living thing, but the life of a living thing is never an actuality. Life is actual in the living, ever changing, ever passing away thing and is real in the transcendence of the constant evanescence of the living thing. Life is never there, never here, never this: life is the transcendence in which what is there, what is here, what is this, in vanishing obtains reality.

The principle of creativity is necessary for the intelligibility of becoming. Only the free, purposive act is internally coherent and so completely intelligible. The free, purposive act is spontaneous; it is supra-temporal, is, in a

sense, eternal. This is the only eternity that has meaning for us, the only eternity we can experience and hence understand.

A reality that is pure being is an empty abstraction. A reality that is all becoming with no share in being is unintelligible. In all process there is a unity in which successive moments are coevally present. The act is the only self-sufficing, internally coherent reality.

To conceive of ultimate Reality as self-sufficient, self-supporting, and inherently coherent we have to see it as an act, an eternal act, an act eternally affirming its being in ceaselessly creating its evanescent existential presentations. That is the insight that came to me as a boy and that has been the core, the foundational principle, of my philosophy ever since.

Shakespeare's corporeal being is in ceaseless mutation. It is not this moment what it was the moment before, no part of it is this moment what it was the moment before. His mind, his personality, his reality, is, strictly speaking, literally nowhere. It is never a this. It does not exist. But his mind affirms its reality in creatively engendering ephemeral worlds. What is not, yet creates: it is not an entity that creates but is simply the creativity. That is our model of self-sufficient, intelligible reality. Even our body affirms its unity by constantly reproducing itself. God affirms Its reality by ceaselessly reproducing Its existence.

I have always believed and affirmed that to be is to be good, and that statement has always had for me a double meaning: first, whatever is, is positive and has value in its proper context; secondly, for a human being, to attain true being, to attain some measure of perfection, she or he has to be good. Badness (I am avoiding the word 'evil' as too strong, too restricted) is essentially negative and destructive. Goodness is positive and affirmative, affirming all value and

all positive being. Hence true being is love and love affirms all true being. These are not puerile sentiments. This is the sum of wisdom.

The alpha and the omega of all wisdom is that humans have wandered far and wide in quest of reality to find in the end that the reality they sought is within them. The reality that in seeking they created, the only reality accessible to them, is their own reality; and that reality is not Being, is not Essence, is not Knowledge, but is their own Creativity, is love that out of its fullness creates ever new dream worlds.

While I say that we are rooted in Reality and also say that the reality in ourselves is all the reality we know, I cannot dogmatically say that we know the World or know Reality in any sense other than the Reality we create for ourselves. I do not know how to characterize, or how students of philosophy may characterize, this position; but I think that is all our nature and the nature of the world permit us, and I am content to live with that much.

The reality of ultimate Reality, of Creative Eternity, is its creativity. It is never an actuality. Its reality is its transcendence of the transience of all actuality. Reality is the transcendent Act. The Act is purposive; purposiveness is Love; it is Plato's *tokos en kalôi*, procreation in beauty. This is my vision of Reality, my model of ultimate Reality. The model is confessedly made in the image of the only reality known to human intelligence. I cannot find the ultimate mystery of Being or the obstinate riddle of Becoming intelligible except in terms of such a vision.

Creative Eternity is the transcendence of evanescence ever realized in the ceaseless vanishing of the evanescent. Creative Eternity is the God that is beyond being and hence cannot exist but has existential actuality in the dreams It eternally dreams.

Quest of Reality

I cannot, with Tennyson, look forward to “one, far-off, divine event / To which the whole creation moves”. I do not find it metaphysically cogent that the world tends to an end. End, then what? I think that as Reality, as Eternity, admits of no beginning, so it admits of no end. Reality, Eternity, is a constant Act, an everlasting creativity. The Act is the alpha and the omega. Reality is not a creation but creativity. Hence I name Reality: Creative Eternity.

If reality is to have any meaning for us, if reality is to be intelligible to us at all, we have to see Reality as that Power

Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

(Shelley, *Adonais*, XLII.)

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

HUMANITY

I

Originally and initially, philosophy is a private affair. A thinker thinks for herself or himself. Whitehead defined religion as what a person does with his solitariness. This definition applies with even more truth to philosophy. A human being, as soon as she or he is conscious of her or his separate individual being is necessarily thereby conscious of her or his solitariness. Human beings inevitably puzzle about the natural happenings around them, but they also puzzle about the meaning and value of their life and about the certainty of death. But a human being, probably from the first emergence of the human species, is a gregarious animal. Human beings must have lived in families, and possibly in clans or tribes, from the very beginning. A human individual cannot puzzle about the meaning and value of her or his individual life without puzzling about the meaning and value of

human life as such. A human being, thinking all by herself or himself and for herself or himself will necessarily think about the meaning and value of human life and of all life. Thus did Zarathustra, the Buddha, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, the Cynics, the Stoics, the Nazarene. Philosophy is not philosophy if it is not philosophy of life and philosophy for life. What professional philosophers have been dawdling with from early in the twentieth century to this day has less to do with genuine philosophy than chemistry or astrophysics.

Whatever view we hold of the world and of reality will necessarily shape our concept of humanity, or, more correctly, will shape our humanity, will constitute what kind of human beings we are. That is why in the end the philosophical Endeavour is of the highest significance for our humanity. All philosophy, all poetry, all art, all science, all technological achievement must in the end be translated into terms of our humanity.

What I have just been saying does not conflict with my insistence that philosophy proper has nothing to do with the practical problems of life or the practical problems of society. I will not quarrel with such designations as political philosophy or philosophy of education although I think it would be more appropriate to view such disciplines as sciences and to speak of political science and science of education. When a philosopher speaks about the problems and the threats facing the human race she or he speaks as a human being, not specifically as a philosopher. A philosopher may contribute to political discussions or discussions about education or health if she or he has made a special study of such areas, but she or he does not then speak as a philosopher but as a politician or educationalist or health expert. I offer the following reflections as coming from a human being claiming no special knowledge or special capability

but gravely concerned about and deeply pained by the human condition in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

II

The human race is one of numerous animal species. Supposedly a relatively larger brain gives humans certain abilities not enjoyed by other animals. But this is a foggy notion. Some insects have skills humans cannot rival. Some animals have highly developed abilities that in humans are rudimentary. Other animals have ways and means for securing their ends that shame human ingenuity. But apparently there is one capacity that is peculiar to humans. When a tiger sees a deer, gauges the distance, and with one leap brings the prey down and dips its teeth in the tender flesh, we can picture the process as a complex whole on the same plane, so that Descartes' depiction of the brutes as automata seems, even if not correct, at least a passable representation. In humans the 'ideas' (in Locke's wide sense of the term) reaching the mind (consciousness) from the surrounding world, seem to go, if we follow Hume, through a peculiar transformation: they come in as impressions and turn into ideas that can be stored, recalled, and worked on in various ways. I would say that this transformation of the impressions into separable replicas is what gives human beings the subjectivity that, as far as we know, is peculiar to humans. By virtue of this subjectivity a human being knows that she or he is a being standing over against an 'external' world; by virtue of this subjectivity a human being knows that she or he is a limited, finite being, subject to change, subject to beneficial and to harmful influences and subject to the final undoing of death.

To my mind, this subjectivity and these ideas born in the mind constitute the proper nature of human beings and give them a special world – no metaphor but in the strictest sense of the word – to live in over and above the physical world in which they

have their physical and biological being. This is liable to be taken as a commonplace statement, but it needs an effort to absorb it in its full bearing. Human beings have created for themselves and are creating for themselves conceptual worlds which are the locus and the source of all human felicity and all human misery. The deer in the forest frolics; senses the welling joy of its vitality; might break a leg and suffer pain; when it espies the tiger preparing to pounce on it is filled with fright; and when the end comes, there is perhaps a moment of sharp pain and then peaceful rest. But it does not suffer nagging anxiety; it does not live in joyful expectation; it does not nurse tormenting vengefulness; it feels neither pride nor remorse. These are all emotions proper to humans because humans have ideas that are separable from the sensations and affections of the moment. A beast kills for food or is killed for food. But only a human being kills for honor or is willing to suffer death for honor. Only human beings created for themselves gods and demons and promised themselves a life beyond life full of pleasure and predicted for their enemies a life beyond life full of torment.

III

In nature there are no definite fixed beginnings. We may, according to paleontologists, take the origins of the human race back to two million years ago, to one million years ago, to 200,000 years ago. But it seems safe to say that humans as we know them at present started their career on earth some 100,000 years ago. Like their closest kin and immediate ancestors in the animal world, humans probably lived in families or small family clans and for most of that span of 100,000 years humans lived on any plants they could pick up or any small animals and fish they could catch.

About 12,000 years ago there was an important turn in the life-story of the human race. In some of the valleys of great

rivers, such as the Nile, the Euphrates, the Tigris, or the Indus, humans learnt to plant the land and to domesticate animals. Groups of human beings became attached to a particular location. This was the birth of civilization. In time there grew towns and cities, and towns and cities were linked in larger inter-related organizations. The ties and sentiments that bound the family or clan members together weakened as they dilated over the larger groups. There were rivalries and conflicts. There were clashes and wars. Even within the relatively smaller communities of city, town, or village, the family spirit and family morality broke down. The congenital differences between individuals became marked and stamped their lives differently. There were the strong and the weak, the industrious and the easy-going, the aggressive and the pacific. There was injustice and there was suffering.

The numbers of human beings continued to multiply, and they continued to grow in separate communities and separate states. Not only did the inequalities and iniquities within each community or state continue to rage, but each community tended to see itself and its members as distinct from and opposed to all the other human communities. Even though great moral teachers – Zarathustra and the Buddha, the Stoics and Jesus, Tolstoy and Gandhi and Schweitzer – all taught that humans are one family and will never enjoy peace and equanimity until they see one another and treat one another as sisters and brothers, the notion of one human family is still far from being genuinely accepted.

Humans now (2013) number seven billion, spread over some 200 political units. More than half of all humans now living live in misery, suffering hunger and disease and ignorance. Many countries are locked in conflict, strife, and mutual destruction. Within the more fortunate countries, there is much injustice and much suffering. And within the privileged minorities in those countries, happiness is a rare thing, not because life is and will

always remain necessarily tragic, but because our ruling philosophies of life are false.

None of the major religions of the world can provide a viable philosophy of life. The superstitions embedded in every one of them that could perhaps at one time pass for harmless myths are damaging to the rationality that is necessary for the citizen of a unified world. Moreover, the established world religions, particularly the monotheistic religions of the Abrahamic tradition, have fostered and continue to foster hatred and animosity towards all who are outside the circumscribed sphere of each of them.

IV

The ultimate aim of civilization should be to unite all people on this our tiny planet in one family, one loving, caring family, where no members can be happy or comfortable when one single member is afflicted. As Albert Schweitzer has wisely said, "Where there is lost the consciousness that every man is an object of concern for us just because he is a man, civilisation and morals are shaken, and the advance to fully developed inhumanity is only a question of time."

The bane of human society is lack of vision. As Whitehead has said, "The folly of intelligent people, clear-headed and narrow-visioned, has precipitated many catastrophes" (*Adventures of Ideas*, p.52). Our recent intellectual and technological advance has been astounding and continues to proceed at an accelerating rate. Sadly, it is blighted by two circumstances that spell imminent disaster. It is accompanied with singular lack of vision and wisdom, and its material benefits are confined to a limited section of humankind.

Where Plenty smiles — alas! she smiles for few —
And those who taste not, yet behold the store,

And as the slaves that dig the golden ore, —
The wealth around them makes them doubly poor.

George Crabbe, *The Village*.

Indeed, the larger portion of humankind are not only denied the benefits; they are actually made to suffer thereby. It seems to be an inbuilt law of the economies ruling our world that for the opulent to become more opulent the miserable have to sink deeper in misery.

Expanding on Plato's prophetic dictum that human society will not find rest till philosophers are kings, Whitehead says, "To-day, in an age of democracy, the kings are the plain citizens pursuing their various avocations. There can be no successful democratic society till general education conveys a philosophic outlook." Further on he adds, "Mankind can flourish in the lower stages of life with merely barbaric flashes of thought. But when civilization culminates, the absence of a co-ordinating philosophy of life, spread throughout the community, spells decadence, boredom, and the slackening of effort" (*Adventures of Ideas*, p.99).

Charles Gore, in *The Philosophy of the Good Life* (1930, 1935), writes, "It is good to reflect how easy would be the redemption of man, economically, socially, and politically, if only mankind in the mass would set itself to be unselfish and self-controlled, honest and just" (p.244). How easy indeed and yet how seemingly impossible. Is there hope for humankind? The words "mankind in the mass" in Gore's statement are significant. It would be extremely unrealistic to hope that all individuals be inwardly good. But I think we can pin our hope on a human culture under which all humans would conform to goodness and under which all individuals may imbibe inwardly something of that goodness. That universal human culture, with room for local variegations, should supersede all institutionalized religions, but

we should carefully guard against its turning into a religion. Our universal human culture must be an alternative to religion but must never become an alternative religion.

IV

Can philosophy help? Not directly. Philosophy can only, along with literature and art, enlighten individuals and give them a taste for the beautiful and the good and help them see that a life of loving kindness and nobility and refinement is the life that makes them inwardly rich and inwardly blissful, and hope that humans may one day catch the idea that that indeed is the life that may give them as much peace and happiness as is attainable in our actual world.

Shelley has spoken wisely when he said, “The great secret of morals is love; or a going out of our own nature, and an identification of ourselves with the beautiful which exists in thought, action, or person, not our own. A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another and of many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own. The great instrument of moral good is the imagination” (*A Defence of Poetry*).

At the end of the *Phaedrus* Socrates offers a prayer rich in wisdom. Only when human beings learn to repeat this prayer with understanding and conviction will there be hope for humanity:

Beloved Pan,
and all ye other gods who haunt this place,
give me beauty in the inward soul;
and may the outward and inward man be at one.
May I reckon the wise to be wealthy,
and may I have such a quantity of gold
as a temperate man and he only can bear and carry.

(Jowett’s translation.)

ANNEX I: AN INTERVIEW

In the autumn of 2005 Joseph Smith published the following interview in *The Die* and *Philosophy Pathways* reproduced it in issue number 112 dated 21st November 2005. I thought it might be helpful to annex it to this book but found that I had neither a digital nor a hard copy and, sadly, I had also lost all contact with Joseph Smith. Geoffrey Klempner, Editor of *Philosophy Pathways*, kindly gave me a link to the relative issue of the electronic journal. I reproduce the text as it appeared there, except for the correction of a few obvious typos; I have also italicized the French *philosophes*.

III. 'INTERVIEW WITH DAOUD KHASHABA' BY JOSEPH SMITH

[The following interview appeared in Issue 9 of The Die, and is reproduced here with kind permission of the Editor. The Die is published by Red Roach Press, <http://www.redroachpress.com/>]

In the spring of 2004, I sent a copy of *The Die* to Geoffrey Klempner. Shortly thereafter, Klempner sent me an email in which he thanked me for *The Die* and said he'd mention my publication the next issue of *Pathways*. True to his word, when his next issue came out, there at the bottom was a small blurb about *The Die*, along with information about how readers could get a copy. One of the people who read that blurb and took me up on my offer of a free issue was none other than independent philosopher Daoud R. Khashaba of Cairo, Egypt. Being true to my word, I responded to Khashaba's e-mail and sent him a copy of *The Die*. He must have liked it, for we have been in frequent contact ever since.

Now, Khashaba and I have never actually met, so I won't go so far as to say I know him. Nevertheless, based on our correspondence clear that he and I share the belief that philosophy is vital to not only our understanding of the world but also to how we understand ourselves and our place in it. Philosophy, as Khashaba writes in *Let Us Philosophize*, 'does not give us knowledge about things. It gives us an understanding of our own minds,' that is, how and why we think (or don't think) about the 'things' that surround us. This rather simple conception of what philosophy can (and cannot) do goes straight to the heart of why I believe philosophy is important to us each and every day of our lives. I know Khashaba does, too, and that is precisely why I decided to interview him for this issue of *The Die*.

Note: In addition to Let Us Philosophize (LUP), Khashaba runs the website <http://www.backtosocrates.com/> (where you can find the complete text of Let Us Philosophize) and also is the author of the recently published Plato: An Interpretation.

The Die When did you become interested in philosophy, and why has it captivated your interest for so many years?

Khashaba As far back as I can remember, as a young boy, I felt that all human beings needed to live in peace and harmony and happiness was understanding. I don't know how I would have defined *understanding* then; I suppose it meant for me something like intuitive sympathy, like the understanding between bosom friends, between mother and child, but I think there was also in it the element of a true estimate of what really mattered in life.

That was during the troubled years that led to the outbreak of World War II, and I recall that I felt completely at a loss to understand how grown up people could fail to understand that, with goodwill and generosity, they could all have enough of the

goods they were killing each other for. At that time also I remember I wanted to write Aesop-like fables, each with an explicit moral 'moral,' so to speak. So I suppose that I can say I thought philosophically before I had ever heard of philosophy. When I came to read Plato's dialogues, I found in Socrates that simple foolish faith in the power of understanding, and it was inevitable that I should identify with him. I still believe that the cure for all human ills is to be found in understanding but, sadly, I am no longer as naively optimistic as I was in my boyhood or as Socrates was to the end of his life.

The Die Why did you write *Let Us Philosophize*? Was it to provide readers with a basic understanding of philosophy or to justify its study in a world where the importance of philosophy is in question?

Khashaba I had long been developing a philosophical outlook that I believed could contribute to human understanding. But until my early 60s my life was not easy, and it was not possible for me to do any sustained writing, or any reading to speak of for that matter. When my circumstances eased, believing that I could not expect to live much longer, I exerted myself to get my scattered notes -- sometimes in tiny pieces or slips of paper -- into some shape. The result was *Let Us Philosophize*, with its patchy, not always well-knit paragraphs.

My objective? I strongly felt that contemporary philosophy had lost its way. Your phrase 'to justify its study in a world where the importance of philosophy is in question' hits the nail on the head.

The Die Throughout LUP there is an undercurrent of praise for Plato and Socrates. What is it about these two that you find so appealing? What can we learn from them?

Khashaba I find in Socrates and Plato -- the thought of these two is a true continuum -- the conception of philosophy as a ceaseless quest for understanding ourselves and the conception of the good life as grounded in the realization of the worth of our inner reality. I think these are the insights that should inform all philosophy. This is the gist of my newly published *Plato: An Interpretation* (2005).

The Die In LUP you write that, 'Humanity is in dire need of rejuvenating and absorbing the Socrates-Plato-Aristotle contribution to the constitution of humanity -- for it is truly that, nothing less.' Why do we need this rejuvenation?

Khashaba I think I have already said why we need this rejuvenation. But let me explain here what I mean by the odd-sounding phrase 'contribution to the constitution of humanity.' This relates to the view that human beings live, strictly speaking, in a world of ideas of their own creation. Our ideals, our values, our beliefs, our superstitions, our illusions are all children of our thought. And philosophy, as a creative exercise of intelligence, is a major contributor of original ideas through which we see and experience the world and ourselves in a particular manner and so live, strictly speaking, in a world constituted by those ideas. Original thinkers give us spiritual eyes that shape the world we live and move and have our being in. This is only metaphor insofar as all linguistic expression is inescapably metaphorical.

The Die When discussing religion, you wrote that, 'Religion is a stage in the development of human culture. With the spread of enlightenment, mankind should discard religion, replacing it with philosophy.' In the most advanced of human societies, man has neglected religion without becoming philosophical.' Is this what Nietzsche was getting at when he wrote in *Thus Spoke*

Zarathustra that (and I'm paraphrasing here) 'even though man has succeeded in killing God, he has yet to find anything with which to replace him'?

Khashaba Yes, I suppose what I had in mind was very much like what Nietzsche had in mind. Only the other day, among notes I am preparing for a book I hope to write on religion, I wrote something that I would have liked to quote in full, if it were not too long, so let me just pluck the following sentences: The French *philosophes* of the 18th century meant to render a much-needed service to humanity when they sought to demolish all dogma and all superstition and establish in their place the reign of reason. In their enthusiasm they achieved an overkill. Their followers, equating reason with science, believed that a scientific attitude and a scientific orientation were all that was needed to give direction and meaning to human life. In place of the old established religions of divine revelation we were given the new established religion of scientific dictation. Thus, while the denudement of religious experience of its theological trappings should have left us with the kernel of pure philosophical insight, scientifically modeled thinking left us with an objectively given world that cannot host value or meaning.

When Nietzsche preached the death of God he was dreaming of the abolition of bondage to handed-down values. The *Ueberschensch* would be ruled only from within. If Nietzsche were to return today, he would be dismayed to find us moving toward a situation where humans will be indistinguishable from the robots they will produce to run their lives for them.

The Die In LUP, you wrote that, 'The answers we give to those questions [posed by Plato] are not what matters. What matters is that in learning to ask those questions, to reflect on those problems, the human mind extends its reach and finds itself

breathing and moving in heavens that were not before.' Is this what we can gain by studying philosophy, the inspiration to ask and think about questions like 'what is good' or 'what is justice,' which (hopefully) lead to greater wisdom?

Khashaba Yes, except that I prefer to speak of philosophizing or thinking philosophically rather than of studying philosophy. Studying philosophy is worse than having nothing to do with philosophy if it is not active, creative engagement in philosophical thinking. Thinking philosophically means simply questioning everything, refusing to exclude anything from subjection to the jurisdiction of reason. A good philosopher is not one who leads readers to accept or adopt her/ his views but one who incites them to puzzle for themselves over the questions that originally gave rise to those views. That was the great secret of the Socratic elenchus. It led Socrates' interlocutors to look within and examine themselves. Plato is the best of philosophers because he continues the work of Socrates. He does not pretend to give us any truths or ready-made conclusions but gives us burning questions that must be kept burning.

The Die Later in LUP you wrote that, 'philosophy has been turned into so many special sciences, useful and interesting, but which cannot fulfill the primary and essential function of philosophical thinking, which is to give intelligibility, unity, and value to our life.' When I read that I immediately thought of how many institutions of higher learning encourage the study of philosophy because it can be of use in business and politics. Based on your assessment of how philosophy is taught today, what do you think is being done right and what is being done wrong?

Khashaba One of my main objectives in writing *Let Us Philosophize* was to draw a sharp and clear line between science and philosophy. Psychology, neuroscience, the methodology of science, the experimental study of the processes of learning, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science -- all of these may be good and useful sciences. But the questions of philosophy have nothing to do with all of that. Philosophy has nothing to do with objective observation or verification or the discovery or ascertainment of fact. The soul, as our scientists and our scientifically oriented philosophers have not tired of telling us, is nothing. It is a fiction. But it is by adopting that fiction that I have a spiritual life. I am a human being in virtue of the ideas I create for myself and that cannot be found anywhere outside my mind. That is how I understand the Socratic-Platonic distinction between the perceptible and the intelligible. And, if I may once more be permitted to refer to my new book, that is the central theme I develop in *Plato: An Interpretation*.

That is why I think the way philosophy is taught today does grave harm by perpetrating the confusion of philosophy and science and trying to subject philosophy to the methods and criteria of science. In doing this I think our academic institutions are turning their back not only to the profound insight of Socrates and Plato but also to that of Kant.

The Die You also wrote that, 'The primary function of philosophy is to provide us with a system of concepts by means of which we can define our place in the world. Our concepts and our symbols are as real as the function they perform: They constitute our reality, but that reality is relative and fugitive.' If that is correct, what about the people who aren't interested in philosophy (or don't philosophize). Who's creating their world?

Khashaba They live in worlds created for them by others -- by traditions, by religious institutions, by the science of the day, by the thought-systems embedded in the competitiveness, commercialism, and consumerism of modern 'advanced' societies, even by the 'culture' of peculiar groups or cliques. So long as and insofar as they do not subject the presuppositions and values that govern their lives to critical examination, they are deprived of the integrity and autonomy of a truly human being.

The Die Later you wrote that, 'Only if all human individuals became philosophers would philosophy redeem humanity. In a good society we would have the philosopher-administrator, the philosopher-artist, the philosopher-scientist, etc.' In saying this, do you mean that philosophy can't change the world, but it can change the individual by teaching him/ her to think through life's situations -- to ask questions about right and wrong, and thereby bring about a better world by improving those who live in it one by one?

Khashaba Exactly. The practical problems of life are the province of science and empirical know-how. The philosopher as philosopher has nothing to contribute to the economy or industry or even the political organization of society. When I said that, 'in a good society we would have the philosopher-administrator, the philosopher-artist, the philosopher-scientist,' etc., I simply meant that in a good society the administrator, the artist, the scientist, in addition to their special areas of knowledge or talent, would also be each of them a philosopher. The prosperity of society would come from their expertise, not from their philosophy. The goodness of society would come from its citizens, all of them, being philosophers.

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ANNEX II: THOUGHTS ON LANGUAGE

[First published in Philosophy Pathways]

Glancing through my Scrapbook, I found that I had at one time collected in one place a number of my jottings on language. I offer them here for what they are worth.

1. Language is not merely speech, not merely communication; the brutes are capable of these. When we speak of language as a cultural property of humankind, we refer to a system of symbols in which a human being's world is reflected so as to constitute a universe in its own right. It is in this universe that humans have their specifically human being.
2. I speak. My lips, my tongue, my vocal chords move. In their movements they strictly obey physical laws. But what initiates, maintains and directs the movement? It is a meaning that flickers in my mind. Whatever physical basis the thought may have, what in fact brings my speech into being — into existence in the actual, physical world — is a meaning creatively formed by a synthesis of sentiments, ideas, desires, memories — things that can never be explained in terms of the givennesses of the physical world or reduced ultimately to such givennesses.
3. The sentence is the creative realization of the initial situation in ideal form. To speak of any necessary identity or similarity or correspondence between the sentence and the initial situation ('fact', givenness, experience) is to express this creative realization in a metaphor. Hence, what is "common between the structure of the sentence and the structure of the fact", as Russell says in explaining Wittgenstein's theory,[1] "cannot...

be itself in turn said in language", because in fact we do not have two things on our hands but a creative progress comprising a single whole. There is no question of a 'Third Man', of an infinite regress.

4. Why should a sentence have to mean something quite definite?
Only for certain purposes — for practical purposes and for the purposes of science which is a special case of practical purpose — is that requisite. For other purposes — for the purposes of poetry and philosophy for instance — it is more important that the sentence should serve as a framework capable of assimilating a wide range of experiences and infusing them with significance. This is as important for the life of intelligence as is exact and accurate information; it is a distinct function of the mind. It is because modern thinkers have been judging philosophy by the criteria of science that they have been so unjust to philosophy and so far-removed from understanding its true nature.
5. Even for the purposes of day to day business, language cannot and should not be precise. A precise language would serve a very limited number of situations with exceeding accuracy and would leave all the rest utterly ineffable. The vagueness of everyday language is a necessary condition of its unlimited applicability, of its practical utility.
6. A 'logically perfect language' is necessary for science and is helpful for certain ancillary philosophical disciplines, but is not required by philosophy proper. Since a 'logically perfect language' is an unrealized and unrealizable ideal, science, in the strictest and fullest sense, must always remain an unrealized ideal.
7. Bertrand Russell says, "The essential business of language is to assert or deny facts." [2] But surely this is only one function of language, and not the most important at that. The essential function of language, which is one with the essential function

of thought, is creative — it is to give realization to intelligence in new meanings.

8. When the Positivists discovered that our metaphysics were a product of our language, they thought that they had finally demolished all metaphysics. They did not observe that all of our thinking, including all of our practical thinking and all of our scientific thinking, is equally a product of our language. All thinking is interpretation and our metaphysics are our most comprehensive interpretations of our world. To throw all metaphysics overboard is to accept to live on a sub-human level, to accept to live within the confines of the here and now: the infinitude (or near-infinitude) of the physical cosmos would avail us nothing, for it is an infinitude that comprehends us and not an infinitude that we comprehend. And to have a metaphysical orientation without being aware of its roots and principles necessarily entails taking the metaphysical allegory too seriously and that is tantamount to living in a Hades of delusion.
9. To understand our language is to understand our mind; to understand our mind is to understand ourselves; to understand ourselves is to understand reality. Language is the realization of the world on the plane of ideas. The classical philosophers knew this; they did not have to state it explicitly since it was self-evident to them. Analytical philosophers created the fiction of a language that is rational and intelligible without being rooted in reality.
10. When a person who is deprived of the power of speech relates behaviorally to other persons, she or he can have a rich emotional life. (I believe that the 'lower' animals too can and do enjoy such a life.) But she or he remains cut off from that peculiar universe in which humans have their distinctive life as rational beings, except in so far as the person in question can find substitute symbols that give her or him access to the

world of conceptual thought. (So, a deaf and dumb individual is not necessarily 'deprived of the power of speech' in the sense intended here.)

11. Language does not 'reflect' our conceptions. Our conceptions are born embodied in language; they come into being as an organic unit — body and soul, meaning and utterance — whole and inseparable. All of this is not metaphor except in so far as all language is metaphor and all thought is mythopoiesis. A 'thought' prior to embodiment in language is an event on an arational plane of being. It only takes its rise in the mind as language. We cannot properly speak of an unexpressed thought. (Of course our definition of the term 'language' has to be broad enough.)
12. Bergson had to be French and to be writing in French. The French mentality – it seems – when wishing to distinguish different nuances of meaning resorts to the creation of so many distinct words, each standing for a definite nuance of meaning. At least that is the ideal. Not so English. English solves the problem by creating a series of words representing overlapping gradations of nuance, so that for the expression of a particular nuance of meaning either of two terms of the series may have an equal claim. No English thinker would have thought of regarding mental operations as consisting of static moments. (Hume did, but then, Hume was not English!) This of course does not invalidate Bergson's reasoning which boils down to saying that in so far as thought abstracts from the totality of reality it necessarily falsifies reality, and this is perfectly valid.
13. A poet creates true universes of his own, in the strictest sense of every single word. But a poet who believes that he is creating worlds on the same plane as the world he lives his daily life in, is insane. If he thinks that his creations are of the same metaphysical status relatively to himself as the world of

daily life also relatively to himself, then he is the victim of a delusion; since the worlds he creates are his game, while in the world on which he rests his feet he is himself part of the game.

14. Common speech is the proper language for philosophy — or at least comes nearer to being so than the language of logical analysis — because the complexities of common speech bring into being realities that are lost sight of in logical analysis, just as the common properties of water are lost sight of to the chemist reducing water to hydrogen and oxygen.
15. Socrates examined critically our common statements, but he did not substitute anything abstruse for them. He sought to arrive at understanding through those selfsame common statements, by establishing the original forms they sought to express.
16. All of this of course does not preclude the need for remedying the obvious faults and ambiguities of everyday language and even for the creation of special languages for special purposes such as for specialized sciences and the practical skills, including the specialized disciplines related to philosophical study.
17. The ability of a little child to use language never ceases to astound me. Here is a field for study that is, literally, inexhaustible. A child does not acquire a stock of ready-made sentences in the same way as she or he acquires a stock of ready-made words. Once she or he learns a sentence-pattern she or he goes on to use it freely. Nothing shows the creativity of the human mind and the true character of all creativity more clearly than this capacity in a little child.
18. A little child can draw correct inferences and construct valid arguments. A language that does not yet have a word for 'logic', gives utterance to logical structures and arguments, because the matrix out of which it grew is an embodiment of

intelligent Reality: all language is internally logical because it is the creative outcome of an intelligent, and therefore rational, Reality.

19. A highly developed language with a rich literature actually creates subtle nuances of thought and special shades of feeling. Every language constitutes a specific spiritual world. People with different languages live in different spiritual worlds, some cruder, some more refined.
20. No linguistic expression can ever have the precision of a mathematical formula. A linguistic expression is always qualified and determined by its context. A mathematical formula has a seeming independence and completeness because it is abstract, lifeless. It is an artificial whole. Common speech, in as much as it is living, has its roots in the living whole that sustains it, and ultimately in the Whole. Because it is part of a whole that necessarily transcends it, it can never disclose all of its meaning, can never be complete. It must always hint and reach out towards what it can never reach. The more of life and of reality an expression has — a cry of anguish, a song of joy, an inspired lyric, a profound philosophic thought — the more hazy it must always be and remain.

Footnotes

1. Bertrand Russell in his Introduction to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* translated by D. F. Pears and B. F. Guinness, 1961, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. x.
2. Bertrand Russell, *op. cit.*, p. x

Friend, let this be enough. If thou wouldst go on reading,
Go and thyself become the writing and the meaning.

Angelus Silesius
(Copied from Victor Gollancz' *A
Year of Grace*, 1950).